



Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
April 24 - 30, 2014

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Aboriginal Arts & Culture

Sask. Aboriginal actor supports Native Americans who walked off set

Native actors, actresses, and the Native cultural advisor left the set of Adam Sandler's newest film

Reported by **Kelly Malone**

First Posted: Apr 24, 2015 1:55pm | Last Updated: Apr 24, 2015 2:30pm

It's not easy for Aboriginal actors to get cast in good roles but Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company's Daniel Knight said it's time for Hollywood to stop using offensive indigenous characters.

[On Wednesday about a dozen Native actors, actresses, and the Native cultural advisor left the set of Adam Sandler's newest film production. They said the satirical western called 'The Ridiculous Six' was insulting to native women and elders and misrepresented Apache culture.](#)

"I was proud they walked off set. That the money and all of that and Hollywood didn't make them forgo their values," Knight said, adding the script seemed very offensive.

"Some of the names, when I first read them, I was like 'whoa!' Like Beaver Breath and what they had them doing, like peeing while smoking the peace pipe, I was like 'whoa!'"

By Thursday it was reported that nine of the actors had quit the production because their concerns were ignored by producers.

Knight said it's not surprising that an Adam Sandler movie would be offensive but that doesn't make it okay.

"It's super disrespectful on my traditional side... and then it's kind of dangerous too in a sense," he said.

"If someone who didn't have any knowledge of the aboriginal identity and the indigenous identity went and saw this movie, they would probably laugh at the jokes because it's stupid and stuff like that. Then they would come back with the wrong view and they wouldn't have the knowledge to combat all the negative viewpoints and stereotypes that are coming out of this movie."

Knight said it's not about asking the movie production to end, Aboriginal actors and actresses are being asked to be treated with respect, including for their culture. That's an

issue when roles offered to Aboriginal people are often set in the Old West.

"As for the roles that come out, or the stories that come out for the indigenous in Hollywood, it's always the western, post contact... Those are the stories they are interested in telling and those stories are always the same," he said.

With the recent casting of well known First Nation's actor Adam Beach as a super villain in the DC Comic's movie Suicide Squad, Knight said there's finally some progress towards diverse roles.

"How often is that going to happen? We can't tell right now if things are getting better because of that, but I know I'm happy that he is that. A little jealous too because I'm an actor and I want to be that," Knight said with a laugh, adding a super villain or Samurai character would be a dream role.

Knight said he doesn't even mind playing the more typical role of the indigenous person in a western film if producers consider real Aboriginal history and culture. He's optimistic that his audition on [Saturday for the new HBO mini-series will showcase that type of character.](#)

"Because I have an understanding ... I was born indigenous, I have indigenous parents, I am steeped in the history and the political climate there," he said.

HBO is looking for actors in Saskatoon for a mini-series produced by Brad Pitt and Tom Hanks. The series "Lewis and Clark" will follow the American explorers on their 1803 expedition.

Casting directors are looking for First Nations men, women and children of all ages. Horseback riding experience is an asset.

The casting call is this Saturday at the Saskatoon Inn from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Direct Link: <http://cjme.com/story/sask-aboriginal-actor-supports-native-americans-who-walked-set/550524>

Drew Hayden Taylor: 10 quick questions with Ojibway playwright and author

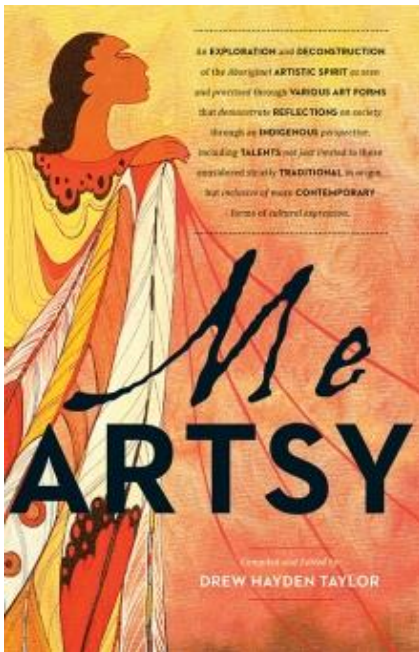
Me Artsy, edited by Drew Hayden Taylor, examines artists' inspiration

By Kim Wheeler, [CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 25, 2015 8:00 AM ET Last Updated: Apr 25, 2015 8:00 AM ET



Author Drew Hayden Taylor's new compilation *Me Artsy* is in bookstores April 25. (Supplied)

Me Artsy is the third book in a series compiled and edited by Ojibway playwright and author Drew Hayden Taylor.



Fourteen indigenous artists have contributed to *Me Artsy*, a collection that explores contemporary indigenous art. (Douglas & McIntyre)

Fourteen indigenous artists have contributed to the book that explores contemporary indigenous art — from music to dance to writing, visual arts and even the culinary arts.

Me Artsy hits bookstores today. Taylor's play *God and the Indian* launches May 2 in Toronto, produced by Native Earth Performing Arts in partnership with Firehall Arts Centre.

With all that going on, Drew still had time to answer 10 quick questions.

1. Do you prefer writing plays or books?

Tough question. Apples and oranges or more accurately, veal piccata or chicken mole. Both unique and specific, equally tasty. Cannot decide.

2. If you weren't a writer, what would you be?

Oddly enough, probably a chef. Roughly, its the same principle as being a writer. Working hard on something that other people will enjoy.

3. What's the last thing you did that scared you?

Driving on a major highway in a horrendous rain storm, without a dozen or so feet of visibility. Or when my car started to shake and I noticed my right left tire making the independent decision to leave the safety of my car and venture across traffic and disappear into a swampy area.

4. Would you rather be artsy or funny?

Funny, though that is such a subjective assessment. I hate people who think they are funny. That is usually up to other people to make that observation. Beware of people who say "I am funny".

5. The reserve or the city?

I am in a reserve state of mind, right now. I spent 25 years in Toronto and enjoyed it. I do miss not being able to order pizza though.

6. What is the most difficult story you've written?

Probably *In a World Created by a Drunk God*. There's just enough autobiography in that play to make it uncomfortable. It's the only one I never gave my mother.

7. Subway or Ojibway?

How about an Ojibway Subway, with lots of spam and cheese whiz — no, never mind.

8. If you could only have one of your plays produced for the rest of time, which play would you choose and why?

How dare you ask a question like that!!! Cannot make that decision. It's like asking somebody to pick their favourite child to show the world. There are some plays I wish had more visibility, and others I am puzzled by their popularity.

9. Which actor who has portrayed one of your characters has been your favourite and why?

I guess Herbie Barnes. We were best friends and he knew my sense of humour and we thought along the same lines quite frequently.

10. What's one thing that no one else knows about you?

I'm a Neil Diamond fan — the singer, not the filmmaker, though I have nothing against the filmmaker!

Listen to Unreserved to hear more from Me Artsy. Mohawk blues musician and Juno award winner Murray Porter joins host Rosanna Deerchild to talk about his contribution to the collection.

Tune into CBC Radio One after the 5 p.m. news in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Nunavut, and after the 4 p.m. news in Yukon and the N.W.T. for these stories and more on Unreserved.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/drew-hayden-taylor-10-quick-questions-with-ojibway-playwright-and-author-1.3042159>

Sask. First Nations actors not concerned about HBO mini-series

Reported by **Lasia Kretzel**

First Posted: Apr 25, 2015 3:08pm | Last Updated: Apr 27, 2015 11:04am

Saskatoon aboriginal residents aren't worried about inaccurate or disrespectful portrayals of their community in an upcoming HBO show.

A couple hundred people lined up outside the Saskatoon Inn Saturday morning to audition for the network's upcoming Lewis and Clark mini-series. The show follows American explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark on their 1803 expedition.

Casting crews are looking for extras with horseback riding experience and First Nations men, women and children for background roles and some speaking roles.

The auditions come just two days after more than a dozen First Nations actors walked off the set of Adam Sandler's movie *The Ridiculous Six* because they felt the film was disrespectful towards their culture.

However, many at Saturday's audition felt confident the same mistake would not be repeated at HBO. Russell Badger said his first impressions of the script were positive.

"It's pretty genuine and doesn't demean us as a people. It portrays us in a good way," Badger said, adding he will reserve final judgment for when he sees the whole script.

Originally from the Mistawasis First Nation, Badger has worked as an actor since 1987. He has had roles such as the Sioux Chief in Jackie Chan's *Shanghai Noon*, the war chief in *DreamKeeper* and Tom in Disney's *Summer of the Monkeys*.

"I make sure that the parts I'm doing are portraying us in a positive way because there's too much negativity a lot of the times in movies," he said. "I refuse to lose my morals and beliefs just to keep a job or position because if I think something is not right, I address

it."

A former teacher, Badger left his position when he felt he wasn't allowed to teach Canadian history from a First Nation's perspective. He said he uses his movie roles to dispel stereotypes and misinformation.

"What they call racism, it's not really racism, it's no understanding (and) ignorance. So we need to bridge that gap," Badger said, adding having the mini-series on such a popular network may encourage more people to ask questions about history.



A woman auditioning for the HBO Lewis and Clark mini-series has her photo taken along with an identification number. Lasia Kretzel/News Talk Radio

Aspiring actress Meghan Dombowsky said having executive producers such as Edward Norton, Tom Hanks and Brad Pitt lends the show some credibility.

"Knowing that they have previous experience, they probably have done their homework," she said as she waited to enter her audition.

Filming for the mini-series will take place in southern Alberta this summer.

Direct Link: <http://cjme.com/story/sask-first-nations-actors-not-concerned-about-hbo-mini-series/550720>

First Nations people try out for HBO show in Saskatoon

HBO miniseries 'Lewis and Clark' casting roles in Saskatoon

By Madeline Kotzer, [CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 25, 2015 7:23 PM CT Last Updated: Apr 25, 2015 7:23 PM CT



CBC spoke with some of the First Nations people auditioning for roles in a new HBO show about their experiences. "When I was a kid I watched *Dances with Wolves* and there was this one character, his name was Wind In His Hair, and I always wanted to have long hair like that. I never really thought too much about acting until people started telling me I should get in to it," Rodrick Rabbitskin said. (Madeline Kotzer/CBC News)

First Nations people from across the province travelled to Saskatoon this weekend to audition for a part on a new HBO show.

The American television network held a casting call in the city for characters in its upcoming TV miniseries *Lewis and Clark*.

According to an HBO press release, the episodes will take audiences on the "epic journey of the Corps of Discovery and its captains, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, who traverse uncharted territory on a mission to deliver President Jefferson's message of sovereignty."

The script is based on the book *Undaunted Courage* by Stephen E. Ambrose, which the network says "tells the story of America's first contact with the land and native tribes of the country west of the Mississippi River."

The show will begin production this summer and has already generated significant buzz thanks to its Hollywood all-star cast of executive producers whom include Edward Norton, Brad Pitt and Tom Hanks.

Saskatoon auditions

CBC spoke with some of the people who came to the casting call in Saskatoon. Read on or flip through the photo gallery above to see what they had to say about the experience.

Rodrick Rabbitskin, 29, Big River First Nation

"When I was a kid I watched *Dances with Wolves* and there was this one character, his name was Wind In His Hair, and I always wanted to have long hair like that. I never really thought too much about acting until people started telling me I should get in to it."

The 29-year-old from the Big River First Nation said he was fast-tracked to the front of the HBO Saskatoon casting call because he had long hair and could speak Cree.

Ashraf Ogram, 31, Saskatoon

"I showed up after most of the crowd... they looked at me and kicked me forward to the audition room. That's about it. I have no idea. I don't speak Cree or any other First Nation language and I don't ride horseback, can't shoot a bow, probably *could* shoot a bow... I have long hair, at least."

Ogram said a part in *Lewis and Clark* would give him something fun to do this summer.

Storm Wapass, 9, Thunderchild First Nation

"Nervous, excited ... I think it'd be pretty cool."

Wapass and many of his family members travelled to Saskatoon to try out for a role.

Mona Rabbitskin, 56, Big River First Nation

"Lewis and Clark, those are explorers that first came to this land, exploring the land and all that. My grandparents used to say about these people... people used to be scared of them. I used to hear the stories from the elders, they spoke of them and they were scared of them, they used to hide when they [saw] these people coming out of nowhere."

Rabbitskin said she came to the auditions to support her daughter. However, she said she was pulled to the front of the audition line by an HBO casting agent because of how she looked and the fact she spoke Cree.

Luke Bintner, 30, Saskatoon

"Technically, you needed to have long hair but I didn't have long hair, so they said 'why are you here?' and I said, because I ride horses. So you go into this room where the stuntman is... I think it went really well because I have been around bison my whole life, and that helped too, because they wanted to know if they could give me a lead rider position. I know how to ride a horse and ride bareback and would be able to cut animals out of the herd."

Bintner said the HBO casting call for *Lewis and Clark* was a "once in a lifetime opportunity."

Valerie Thomas, 29, Big River First Nation

"It is new for me ... I didn't know what to expect today. If I were to be an extra it would be a story to tell my children, my children's children. My friends, to post about."

Thomas said the casting call has been all anyone from her reserve has been talking about for days.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/first-nations-people-try-out-for-hbo-show-in-saskatoon-1.3049081>

Royal B.C. Museum's First Nations language exhibit wins award

[Mike Devlin](#) / Times Colonist
April 29, 2015 06:00 AM



Hyacinth Delos Reyes, visiting from Boise, Idaho, with her 18-month-old daughter, Khrysta, checks out the new Our Living Languages exhibit at the Royal B.C. Museum. Photograph By BRUCE STOTESBURY, Times Colonist

A groundbreaking exhibit at the Royal B.C. Museum has won a prestigious award from the largest museum association and advocacy group in the U.S.

The American Alliance of Museums, based in Washington, D.C., honoured the Victoria museum Monday at the 27th annual Excellence in Exhibition Awards. The Belleville Street museum won for Our Living Languages: First Peoples' Voices in British Columbia, which explores through audio recordings 34 of B.C.'s First Nations languages from the perspective of First Nations people.

"We've been told it won for the innovation, in that it was a sound installation," said Royal B.C. Museum CEO Jack Lohman. "It was a novel way of dealing with language."

The award was presented at the organization's annual meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. Victoria's natural and human history museum was honoured at the gala alongside

Arizona's Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Pennsylvania's the Franklin Institute and New Jersey's National September 11 Memorial & Museum.

The Royal B.C. Museum exhibit, created in partnership with the First Peoples' Cultural Council, was selected from a record 37 submissions this year, organizers said. The Excellence in Exhibition award was open to non-commercial institutions such as museums, zoos, aquariums and botanical gardens that offered exhibitions to the public between Nov. 30, 2012, and Nov. 30, 2014.

Mark Dickson, head of exhibitions for the B.C. museum, was on hand to accept the award and explain the exhibit, which includes interactive stations, First Nations artwork, video and audio, and provides visitors an opportunity to hear a greeting in one of the 34 First Nations languages while walking through a "language forest."

Lohman said the win "heralds other changes" at the museum, and will likely change how First Nations collections and exhibits are presented. "It opens up new ways of working for us."

Our Living Languages: First Peoples' Voices in British Columbia is one of the few exhibitions in the world to deal specifically with language, Lohman said. Other institutions are looking to add something similar to their collections in the future, he added. "This is a very good model to follow."

The exhibit will conclude its three-year-run at the Royal B.C. Museum in June 2017.

For more information, go to royalbcmuseum.bc.ca.

- See more at: <http://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/royal-b-c-museum-s-first-nations-language-exhibit-wins-award-1.1868310#sthash.Bth7EAce.dpuf>

Singer dubbed 'Cree Rihanna' is looking to hit the big time

Mariame is first artist signed to new N'we Jinan record label

By Terrence Duff, Susan Bell, [CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 28, 2015 6:23 PM ET Last Updated: Apr 29, 2015 6:09 PM ET



Mariame Hasni, aged 24, is getting ready to launch her debut cd Bloom. (N'we Jinan)

She hopes one day to be known only as Mariame.

24-year-old Mariame Hasni, born of a Cree mother and an Algerian father, lives in Montreal. And she has big musical aspirations.



Mariame was discovered by her grade six principal while singing in the school washroom. (N'we Jinan)

"It was like baby steps....It started with being discovered in the bathroom in elementary (school). The first step was my mother who put me in singing lessons. That's how it grew...slowly, slowly."

Hasni is a very well-known quantity in the Quebec Cree communities of James Bay, where she is sometimes called the Cree Rihanna. In 2013, she was given the Rising Star Award, by the Cree Native Arts and Crafts Association. She has been touring all the communities of the territory since she was 13 years old.

"Everybody's jaws dropped," said Hasni, when asked about her first performances.

"Everybody was just really surprised because I was like that kid who was quiet and shy...and didn't really say much, So (I got) a lot of attention. I wasn't used to that and the shyness went away."

Now she is coming out of her shell even more, with the release of a first album entitled *Bloom*, which will be released on May 26th.

On Tuesday, the first video from *Bloom - As Long As You Are Here* - was released.

"I am very proud of myself of where I am right now and how everything is going and how everything is growing," said Hasni.

Aside from her own dreams and aspirations, Hasni is also carrying the aspirations of a brand new record label. She is the first artist signed to the N'we Jinan label.

The label grew out of a very popular music education program of the same name, which brought hip hop artist and music educator David Hodges into all the Cree communities in March of 2014. He brought a travelling studio and spent a few days in each Cree community mentoring youth in music production.



The N'we Jinan record label is looking to mentor First Nations talent in music production. (N'we Jinan)

"One of the things that convinces me of wanting to work with an artist is raw talentgiftedness," said Hodges.

"You are born with something that separates you from the rest. When I first heard Mariame, she had that."

The Cree Native Arts Crafts Association (CNACA) asked Hodges to produce Mariame Hasni's album. Hodges said it was a natural progression to start an actual record label.

N'we Jinan is now a partnership between Hodges, CNACA and Joshua Iserhoff, the Youth Grand Chief of the CNYC.

"There is so much room for career development and sustainability for the arts in First Nations communities" *David Hodges, music producer*

Hodges says it was important to him to build on the success of the N'we Jinan music education program, which has produced a successful album, *N'we Jinan Volume 1*, and several videos.

"I believe that with the success of *N'we Jinan Volume 1* came a moral responsibility...to keep building with the First Nation communities," said Hodges.

"I believe there is so much room for career development and sustainability for the arts in the First Nation communities, specifically in the Eeyou Istchee, but also building bridges with the other First Nations communities and the world."

Hodges says what they are learning recording, packaging and marketing Hasni's album *Bloom* will help other young artists as well. He says it's been a joy to work with Hasni, because she has talent, but also a willingness to work hard.

As a single mother to two young children — a boy named Malachi, and a girl, Tiara — Hasni says it hasn't always been easy.

"It's not easy being a single mother and trying to juggle my career as a singer and raise my kids, but it's possible," said Hasni, adding she wouldn't be able to do it without the support of her mother, Elizabeth Napash.

"Somehow things work out if you really believe."

"It means so much to me for my kids to look up to me and to see me strive for what I love," said Hasni.

She recently performed in Montreal at a well-known venue, Club Soda.

"It was really different, everyone in the crowd was going crazy and I am not really used that, so it felt like I had more energy, like their energy was coming into my energy. It was a big deal for me (as) I don't usually perform in big events like that."

Her album, *[Bloom](#)*, will drop in iTunes on May 26, 2015.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/singer-dubbed-cree-rihanna-is-looking-to-hit-the-big-time-1.3050719>

Aboriginal Business & Finance

Reverse trade show seeks aboriginal partners

By Scott Larson, The StarPhoenix April 25, 2015



Jordan Duguay, left, and Allen Sawatzky of Enbridge at the Dakota Dunes Casino on Friday.

Building business relationships is best done face-to-face, says Allen Sawatzky. That's why oil giant Enbridge is putting on a series of Aboriginal Business Reverse Trade Shows, the latest being held Friday at the Dakota Dunes Casino, said Sawatzky, senior manager of pipeline construction with Enbridge.

The trade show featured representatives from 12 Enbridge contractors - from main line contractors to facility contractors - who had a chance to meet people from 200 local aboriginal businesses.

"The major contractors get to meet businesses they might not know are out there," Sawatzky said.

Jordan Duguay, aboriginal business adviser with Enbridge's aboriginal relations division, said a crosssection of aboriginal businesspeople were invited to the event along with a number of others who heard about the show.

"What we're trying to do through this event is facilitate a business relationship with those contractors, with Enbridge and with aboriginal businesses in the Saskatchewan area," Duguay said.

Duguay said Enbridge is committed to providing opportunities for aboriginal businesses on projects such as its proposed \$7.5-billion Line 3 Replacement Program, the largest project in Enbridge history.

The line runs from Hardisty, Alta., to Gretna, Man., and will take three seasons to replace.

First Alliance Construction, an oilfield construction company based in Saskatoon, would like to be part of the conversation when the project gets off the ground.

"I'm here to discover some of the prime contractors that we can maybe do work with in the future," said First Alliance president Bill Crowe. "Just to learn a little about what we can do as a First Nation company with Enbridge in the future."

First Alliance has been in business for five years and has grown to 200 employees at peak times and has jobs across the Prairie provinces.

Crowe said being able to meet a number of contractors in one place is very beneficial.

"Engaging with First Nations people and communities and events like this is the way to go."

Sawatzky said contractors like to hire local partners because not only does it support local communities, it is economical.

"The closer you are to the work, the cheaper it is to get those services," he said. "(The trade show) is facilitating the opportunity to begin a discussion."

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/business/Reverse+trade+show+seeks+aboriginal+partners/11003876/story.html>

B.C. First Nations build innovative partnerships

Aboriginal communities open routes to economic mainstream

April 28, 2015, 6 a.m.

[Economy](#)

By Scott Simpson

Seyem' Qwantlen Business Group president Tumia Knott (left) and director of operations Brenda Fernie in the kitchen at Lelem' Arts and Cultural Café, which operates on city-owned property in Fort Langley | Photo: Seyem' Qwantlen Business Group



It's approaching noon, and a lunchtime crowd has Lelem' Arts and Cultural Café buzzing. Even among the funky aggregation of cafés, restaurants and retail shops that make Fort Langley one of the most distinctive communities in British Columbia, Lelem' stands out. It boasts an organic West Coast fusion menu, jazz nights and, on the walls, paintings, carvings and other artwork celebrating the heritage of the café's owners – the Kwantlen First Nation.

Brenda Fernie and Tumia Knott arrive together, shake the rain from their overcoats, sit down and present business cards to a first-time customer at Lelem'. Fernie, a former operations director for Coast Mountain Bus Co., is director of operations for Seyem' Qwantlen Business Group, a for-profit enterprise of the 250-member Kwantlen First Nation. Knott, who has a law degree, is president, as well as a 20-year band councillor.

These women are part of a new generation of First Nations entrepreneurs who are moving their communities into the economic mainstream. In the resource sector, the Supreme Court of Canada's recognition of aboriginal title in the Tsilhqot'in decision has created an uncertain climate for investment in activities such as forestry and mineral exploration. But for communities such as Kwantlen that are seeking partners for economic development, the mood is upbeat.

Lelem' operates in a building owned by the Township of Langley, which selected Seyem' Qwantlen's innovative proposal from a range of suggestions from businesses and community groups for best use of the property.

The lease includes sharing a portion of the café with Langley Township for 1,000 hours per year of recreation programming, Fernie explained. "It's an opportunity for people to learn about our culture. I don't think it could have turned out any better."

Knott said the partnership with the township reflects Kwantlen's willingness, dating back to the establishment of Fort Langley as B.C.'s first mainland colony, to form mutually beneficial business relationships.

"If you look at many of our past chiefs, there always seems to have been a relationship that was broader than the reserve. The legacy has been passed down," Knott said. Last year, Seyem' Qwantlen was recognized with business awards from the Industry Council

for Aboriginal Business and the BC Economic Development Association. Closer to home, the Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce shortlisted it for Entrepreneur of the Year.

Seyem' Qwantlen also operates a gift shop in the Fort Langley National Historic Site as well as companies for forestry, construction, environmental services and archeology, an IT company called Coast Salish Technologies, security services and site and building rentals.

Land development is also a priority, such as a proposal for residential, commercial and light industrial development on Kwantlen reserve property in Maple Ridge.



Tsawwassen Mills – at 1.2 million square feet, the largest enclosed shopping centre being built in Western Canada – is the result of a unique lease agreement with the Tsawwassen First Nation Economic Development Corp., which is also proceeding with a massive industrial development nearby | IVANHOE CAMBRIDGE

There's potential for conflict where aboriginal property development clashes with local growth targets and infrastructure spending. To avoid that, Seyem' Qwantlen recently played host to a regional summit involving Kwantlen band council and local government members from Pitt Meadows, Maple Ridge and Mission.

“It's important to keep the dialogue open and find synergies in planning,” Fernie said. “What benefits us should also benefit Maple Ridge. We're going to be dependent on them for services so it only makes sense that we nurture that relationship. Nobody wants to live beside a neighbour that they're not getting along with.”

Land is also central in economic development projects involving other First Nations around the province.

Through the federal government, the Squamish, Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations in 2014 created a partnership for a \$307 million land acquisition deal that will lead to development of Metro Vancouver properties including the Jericho Lands in Point Grey.

The Osoyoos Indian Band, one of Canada's leaders in aboriginal entrepreneurship, recently signed a 120-year lease with the South Okanagan Motorsports Corp. for Area 27, a multi-purpose "motorsports country club" on 277 acres of Osoyoos band property.

Two retail megamalls are already under construction on Tsawwassen First Nation property in South Delta, and the First Nation's TFN Economic Development Corp. recently announced development deals creating 1.5 million square feet of warehousing space on an 80-acre parcel of its industrial land reserve, close to Deltaport container port. That makes the Tsawwassen a cornerstone in efforts to expand the Pacific Gateway trade corridor in the years and decades ahead.

"Essentially we are Mile Zero for the rest of Canada in terms of logistics and distribution," said Chris Hartman, TFN Economic Development Corp. CEO. "From a transportation and infrastructure perspective, our lands are probably as best-served as any parcel in the Lower Mainland."

Direct Link: <http://www.biv.com/article/2015/4/bc-first-nations-build-innovative-partnerships/>

Aboriginal Community Development

Northern Ontario First Nation community begins evacuation due to flooding

By Liam Casey The Canadian Press, April 23, 2015 4:26 am



WATCH ABOVE: Charlie Angus, the MP whose riding of Timmins-James Bay includes Kashechewan, chastised the federal government for its inertia on the now-annual evacuation of the community.

KASHECHEWAN, Ont. – The evacuation of a remote northern Ontario First Nation has begun as the rapidly rising Albany River threatens the community.

Three flights have already left the James Bay community of Kashechewan, Ont., en route to Kapuskasing, according to Chief Derek Stephen.

About 600 of the most vulnerable residents will be gone by Friday, Stephen said.

The dike protecting the community is old and inadequate, with an engineering assessment showing there's a "horrible risk of collapsing," he said.

The plan is to have all 1,900 residents leave within the next week with "15 to 20 men" remaining behind to keep an eye on the town and its precarious dike.

This is the fourth consecutive year the First Nation has had to be evacuated.

Stephen says the community spent \$21 million on the evacuation last year, and millions more on repairs after much of the community had to live elsewhere for about a month. About 350 people still live in hotels and apartments in Kapuskasing because of last year's flood.

It's time to move the entire community to higher ground so they don't have to do this every spring when the ice thaws and the Albany River rises, Stephen said.

"We cannot continue to live this way," he told *The Canadian Press* on Wednesday.

The office of Bernard Valcourt, the minister of aboriginal affairs and northern development, said the government is "taking action" in First Nation communities across the country. The federal government is working along with the band council and the province to evacuate Kashechewan.

"We have made investments to hire an emergency preparedness co-ordinator to help James Bay First Nations, including Kashechewan, prepare and manage potential spring flooding," said a statement from the minister's office.

Charlie Angus, the MP whose riding of Timmins-James Bay includes the flood-prone area, chastised the federal government for its inertia on the now-annual evacuation of the community.

"If the water moves too fast this year, that dike wall could fail, and there could be a catastrophe in that community," Angus said.

"The government knows it, the engineering reports show it, so why are we playing Russian roulette with the lives in Kashechewan year after year?"

Direct Link: <http://globalnews.ca/news/1956172/flooding-forces-evacuation-of-n-ontario-first-nation-community/>

Funeral Saturday for 5 Mistissini Cree hunters who died in cabin fire

Families waited 3 weeks for coroner's identification of remains

By Terrence Duff, Jaime Little, [CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 24, 2015 9:18 AM CT Last Updated: Apr 24, 2015 9:18 AM CT



Chiiwetin Coonishish was one of five hunters killed in a cabin fire on Lake Bussy in northern Quebec. A combined funeral will be held Saturday morning in Mistissini. (Facebook)

A combined funeral will be held tomorrow in Mistissini, Que., for five hunters who died in a cabin fire at Lake Bussy almost a month ago.

The families were waiting for the Quebec coroner's office to positively identify the remains of all five men before proceeding with funeral arrangements. Mistissini Chief Richard Shecapio says the wait has been hard on the families.

"It has been tiring for the families and community members, just that waiting period, but I think at this point there's a sense of relief now that we have confirmation of the identification of all the five. It's another step for healing."

Chiiwetin Coonishish, 22, Emmett Coonishish, 39, Charlie Gunner, 37, Kevin Loon, 33, and David Jimiken, 38, were found dead on April 1 in a hunting cabin that had been destroyed by fire, about 300 kilometres north of Chibougamau.

Services were held in the community that weekend, and a memorial took place the following week at the site of the fire.

"It's not a process that will take a few days," says Chief Shecapio. "It takes time for healing to take place."

The Cree Health Board has [added additional support for Mistissini residents dealing with grief](#) and a 24-hour hotline at (418) 770-9620.

A memorial viewing will take place between 7 and 9 a.m. on Saturday followed by a family memorial viewing from 9 to 10 a.m. The funeral service will begin at 10 a.m. at the Neoskweskau Complex Arena in Mistissini.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/funeral-saturday-for-5-mistissini-cree-hunters-who-died-in-cabin-fire-1.3047435>

Nunatsiavut is open for business, says board chairman

Nunatsiavut Group of Cos. reports five-fold growth in revenues over past five years

By Terry Roberts, [CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 25, 2015 6:34 AM NT Last Updated: Apr 25, 2015 6:34 AM NT



Clint Davis, chairman of the Nunatsiavut Group of Cos., board of directors, addressed the St. John's Board of Trade on April 15. (CBC)

Those who overlook the growing business opportunities that exist in aboriginal communities in this country risk missing the boat on a market that is growing quicker than many realize.

That was one of the key messages delivered by leaders with the Nunatsiavut Inuit during a marketing pitch to the St. John's business community on April 15.

In other words — Labrador is open for business and partnerships are welcome.

A delegation from the Nunatsiavut government and its business arm, the Nunatsiavut Group of Companies (NGC), were given a warm welcome during a luncheon by members of the St. John's Board of Trade, with many of its members already doing business in Labrador.

Len Knox, senior vice-president with H.J. O'Connell Construction in St. John's, didn't have to be convinced of the opportunities in Labrador, or the benefits of working with aboriginal leaders and companies.



Len Knox is senior vice-president with H.J. O'Connell Construction in St. John's. (CBC)

H.J. O'Connell has done business in the Big Land since the late 1950s on several major projects, including the Voisey's Bay mining project.

Knox appreciates and supports the Inuit's emphasis on jobs and training, growing their companies and pursuing business opportunities that support the "supply chain."

"It's been successful because they believe in strong business principles – honesty and integrity – and at the end of the day what's fundamental is to make money," said Knox.

Leading the delegation was Clint Davis, chairman of the Nunatsiavut Group of Cos. board of directors, and vice-president of aboriginal affairs for TD Bank.

Davis, a lawyer, is an Inuk from Labrador who now resides in Toronto.

The president of the Nunatsiavut government, Sarah Leo, was also on hand.

Five-fold business growth

It was a unique marketing strategy for an aboriginal group that has experienced incredible economic growth in recent years, beginning with the signing of the Labrador Inuit land claims agreement in late 2005, paving the way for the Nunatsiavut government.

The agreement also changed the Inuit approach to economic development, with a distinct separation of business from government, and a focus on profitable enterprises that can generate earnings to be reinvested into the Nunatsiavut region.

The NGC is owned by the Labrador Inuit Capital Strategy Trust, and the Nunatsiavut government is one of its beneficiaries.



The Northern Ranger, operated by an arm of the Nunatsiavut Group of Cos., brings vital supplies to isolated communities along Labrador's north coast. (CBC)

The NGC now operates businesses in the areas of marine and air transportation, commercial real estate, construction, remote camp operations, logistics and heavy civil.

They include familiar names like Air Labrador and Universal Helicopters, along with the company that provides and administers marine transportation on the Labrador coast, Nunatsiavut Marine.

The group of companies recorded revenues of some \$30 million last year, a five-fold increase over five years ago.

The companies employ hundreds of aboriginals, who are helping drive what many are calling a "remarkable transformation" in aboriginal communities that have been long plagued by chronic unemployment and a wide array of social problems.

The region is also benefiting from an impact benefits agreement related to the Voisey's Bay mining project.

It's all part of a strategy of becoming an Inuit-led business leader in the north.

"We've come a long way," Davis said, adding, "there is more to be done."

Turnaround worth the wait

It took nearly 30 years for the land claims agreement to be finalized, and for the Labrador Inuit to realize self-governance.

Davis said it was worth the wait.

He said the agreement, and the resulting benefits from economic development, are "significantly helping" Inuit communities such as Nain, Hopedale, Postville, Makkovik and Rigolet.



The Nunatsiavut Group of Cos. is a majority owner of Air Labrador, a company that has been flying in Labrador for more than 60 years. Today, it is distinctly Inuit. (CBC)

A plunge in commodity prices has created a noticeable lull in economic activity in Labrador, but there remains a multitude of opportunities in this vast land, Davis added.

NGC is looking for ways to partner with new investors, both inside and outside of Labrador.

"We're developing the professional capacity and experience to do bigger things," Davis stated.

He said issues such as poverty, crime and youth suicide often overshadow the true picture unfolding in aboriginal communities.

Davis said the "tide is turning" and land claims agreements have "opened up incredible employment and business opportunities" for aboriginal communities who were previously shut out of the benefits of resource development on their lands.

'I think by working with Inuit business we can strengthen the relationship and forge a better understanding of each other, which will only lead to a better future for everyone in the province.'- *Clint Davis*

He added the aboriginal population is growing at a rapid rate — and it's much younger than the general population.

A study by TD Bank four years ago estimated the combined buying power of aboriginal people, businesses and communities in Canada at \$32 billion by 2016.

Davis said this proves aboriginal people are not a drain on the Canadian economy.

As such, Davis said non-aboriginals have a vested interest in ensuring land claims agreements succeed, and that governments at every level respect their obligations.

"I think by working with Inuit business we can strengthen the relationship and forge a better understanding of each other, which will only lead to a better future for everyone in the province," Davis said.



When the Nunatsiavut Group of Cos. purchased an ownership stake in Universal Helicopters two years ago, it was one of the largest acquisitions ever by an aboriginal company. (CBC)

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/nunatsiavut-is-open-for-business-says-board-chairman-1.3035345>

Chill in the air as Arctic nations meet

By Jo Biddle April 24, 2015 7:04 PM



Iqaluit (Canada) (AFP) - Arctic nations warned Friday of the dangers facing the environment and the peoples of the remote region, as it now also becomes a new flashpoint in global tensions with Russia.

The Arctic is warming twice as fast as everywhere else on the globe and US officials last month said the Arctic sea ice had reached its lowest winter point since satellite observations began in the late 1970s.

While the polar melt is of major concern because of rising sea levels, it is also opening up new ocean trade routes, and offering the tantalizing promise of untapped offshore oil and gas fields in an energy-hungry world.

"One of the biggest challenges everybody has talked about today is climate change. The numbers are alarming -- and that's putting it mildly," US Secretary of State John Kerry told ministers as the United States took over from Canada as the chairman of the Arctic Council.

"As we take necessary steps to prepare for climate change, we also have a shared responsibility to do everything we can to slow its advance, and we cannot afford to take our eye off that ball."

He was meeting in the small northeastern Canadian town of Iqaluit, on Baffin Island, with other ministers from Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia and Sweden.

The town, which grew up around a World War II US air base, now boasts a population of about 7,500, with more residents flocking to the remote region, drawn by work in iron ore and diamond mines.

The US is putting forward a framework action plan to rein in methane gas emissions and black carbon -- or soot -- created through such activities as gas flaring or oil exploration.

It would mark the first time that the Arctic Council has reached an accord to work together to mitigate the effects of climate change through regional action.

A framework accord on working to reduce black soot and methane "sends a hugely important message that climate change mitigation can be organized regionally as well as globally," said Alaskan fisherman Michael Stickman, chairman of the Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC).

Kerry warned black carbon is up to 2,000 times more potent than carbon dioxide, while methane gas escaping from thawing permafrost is 20 times more dangerous to the atmosphere than CO₂.



- Russia tensions -

There are underlying tensions though, as Russia, under global sanctions due to its role in the conflict in Ukraine, begins to flex its muscles in the region.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov did not attend the meeting, with Moscow sending environment minister Sergei Donskoi instead.

Lavrov's absence was regretted by Stickman, who said the Arctic should be shielded from international tensions.

"No matter what is happening in the outside world, cooperation in the Arctic is moving forward," Donskoi insisted.

"There is no room here for confrontation or fear-mongering," he said, adding Russia was "against politicizing the Arctic."

Although Canadian Environment Minister Leona Aglukkaq said she had privately voiced anger at Russia's role in Ukraine, she sought to downplay any fallout for the work of the council, saying it was done through consensus.

But Kerry again took issue with Moscow's actions in eastern Ukraine, pointing the finger at Russia in saying that "it is clear at this point in time" that the Minsk ceasefire deal "has not been lived up to sufficiently."

According to a 2008 study by the US Geological Survey, the Arctic may hold 13 percent of the planet's undiscovered oil and 30 percent of the world's natural gas.

While tackling climate change will be high on the US agenda as chair of the Arctic Council, Washington also hopes to improve ocean stewardship, maritime safety and the lives of the Arctic's four million inhabitants.

The melting ice also creates shorter shipping routes between the Pacific and the Atlantic - connecting markets in Europe and Asia, with the numbers of ships crossing the Bering Strait on the rise.

Nations are also gearing up for major UN talks in Paris in December to agree a new international pact pegging global warming to 2C over pre-industrial levels.

Direct Link: <http://news.yahoo.com/chill-air-arctic-nations-meet-193659974.html>

Plan helps aboriginals adapt to city

The Starphoenix April 25, 2015

The province is investing \$330,000 in a First Nations employment project for workers moving from rural settings to the city.

The First Nations Urban Navigator Project, Saskatoon Tribal Council's latest employment project, will support participants and their families as they move from rural to urban life by helping them secure sustained employment and overcome barriers such as housing, transportation and child care.

Urban Navigator staff will work with employers and industry to identify employment opportunities for First Nations people, assist employers throughout the hiring process, and develop strategies and best practices with regard to First Nations hiring and retention.

"One of our main goals is to collaborate with funders and organizations to help create training and employment opportunities for newcomers to the city to ensure their adjustment is successful," said Saskatoon Tribal Council Chief Felix Thomas in a news release. "We are doing this with the Urban Navigator Project as it helps First Nations leaving the reserve and relocating to the City of Saskatoon to build roots and foundations here."

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/business/Plan+helps+aboriginals+adapt+city/11003875/story.html>

Aboriginal Crime, Justice & Law Enforcement

Port Alberni residents defrauded by man posing as First Nations chief

[Katherine Dedyna](#) / Times Colonist

April 25, 2015 06:00 AM



Port Alberni RCMP are seeking public assistance in identifying a caller who posed as Chief Hugh Braker.

Three Port Alberni residents have been defrauded of hundreds of dollars apiece by a telephone caller who, while claiming to be Tseshah First Nation elected Chief Hugh Braker, asked for money to deal with a non-existent family emergency.

“I’m annoyed and angry with the perpetrator,” Braker said. “And I’m hopeful the police are going to catch this guy as soon as possible.”

Braker said he was disgusted that the man would take advantage of “gullible but kindhearted people” by telling at least one victim that his daughter had died in Vancouver and he needed money to get there. The man asked potential victims to meet him in Nanaimo.

“One victim called me and said he felt so bad that he jumped out of his car and gave the man a hug, because he had just lost a child,” Braker said.

Port Alberni RCMP are seeking public assistance in identifying the caller. “The money requested is alleged to be used to cover off flight costs, to attend Vancouver, regarding a local family’s sick child in a medical crisis,” said Const. Scott MacLeod of the Aboriginal Policing Section.

When people hoping to help meet him in Nanaimo, “the suspect purports he is departing on an immediate flight to Vancouver.”

The cash lost ranged from \$300 and \$500 per victim, MacLeod said. At least five Port Alberni-area residents were approached, and three gave money. Two refused after looking further into the request. Braker said he thinks there’s another victim in Victoria. None of the people scammed were First Nations, as far as he knows.

“As a chief councillor, it’s embarrassing,” Braker said. “What’s going to happen the next time I have to make a statement that’s legitimate?”

The RCMP say they hope publicizing the incidents will prevent further loss. They urge caution toward solicitations of money over the phone and say the solicitor’s identity should always be confirmed.

Anyone who may have information is asked to call 1-250-723-2424 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS.

- See more at: <http://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/port-alberni-residents-defrauded-by-man-posing-as-first-nations-chief-1.1865037#sthash.XVsgIA9m.dpuf>

RCMP arrest Whitehorse teen in killing of First Nation girl Brandy Viittrekwa

KATHRYN BLAZE CARLSON

The Globe and Mail

Published Wednesday, Apr. 29 2015, 3:49 PM EDT

Last updated Wednesday, Apr. 29 2015, 9:01 PM EDT

Nearly five months after the body of a native girl was discovered on a Whitehorse walking trail, a teenaged male has been charged with second-degree murder in connection with the killing that shook the local First Nation community and triggered all available RCMP resources.

Brandy Viittrekwa, who was just two months shy of her 18th birthday, was found dead in the Yukon capital’s Kwanlin Dun First Nation community on Dec. 8, tragically joining the more than 1,180 aboriginal women who have been killed or gone missing in Canada over the past three decades. In a territory that saw zero homicides in each of the three years prior, her death marked the second killing in Whitehorse’s McIntyre subdivision in just six months.

In a statement Wednesday, the Yukon RCMP said the Major Crime Unit had arrested a youth Tuesday, bringing relief to a community whose chief had been pressing the federal force for answers. The youth, who cannot be named because he is a minor, appeared in court Wednesday and was charged with second-degree murder. A publication ban has been ordered and the next court date is set for May 7.

The victim’s father, Clarence Snowshoe, told The Globe and Mail late Wednesday afternoon the arrest has brought the family “a bit of closure.” Earlier, a woman who

answered the phone at the Vittrekwa home said the girl's mother, Norine Vittrekwa, was in court to see the charges laid.

The RCMP would not clarify whether the individual is the same suspect in the case who was in custody in mid-December on unrelated charges, saying the force cannot release any information that could lead to identification. Police said last year the suspect's "connection to the incident continues to be examined and clarified by investigators."

Kwanlin Dun's chief, Doris Bill, said the accused is a 15-year-old male and is a member of a different First Nation in the territory. "The community is very relieved," she said. "I'm glad for her family. I hope this brings them some measure of peace."

A spokeswoman for the Yukon coroner's office said the autopsy and toxicology analysis have been performed, but she declined to comment further citing the homicide investigation and court process.

Brandy Vittrekwa's death coincided with a ramped-up RCMP presence in the community amid security concerns. In the statement Wednesday, the force thanked those who "have contributed to the safety of their community by providing information that has assisted the police with this investigation."

Ms. Bill said the community has taken steps to improve security, including replacing burned-out streetlights and blocking the walking trail's entrance with a snow mound during the winter. Discussions are also under way to potentially shutter the wooded path and to create a safety patrol program.

Norine Vittrekwa told The Globe in December that a pair of RCMP officers knocked on her door around 5 a.m. on Dec. 9, a day after her daughter had been reported missing. They wanted to know what the 17-year-old had been wearing the last time she saw her, on Dec. 7. Norine Vittrekwa got official word of the death hours later.

"I don't know what happened to her," she said at the time. "That's what I need to know. And I need to see her. To say goodbye." The teen left behind an 11-year-old brother who, when told of the death, said, "But mom, I just wanted to see her one last time."

Brandy Vittrekwa moved from Fort McPherson, NWT, to Whitehorse in September, 2012, because her mother had enrolled in college there. She made friends quickly, her mother said, but she also started going missing, here and there, for a day or two.

The girl's Facebook page was immediately filled with posts from Porter Creek Secondary School friends honouring her life and lamenting her death. She was just two credits short of a high-school diploma.

"It's a tragedy all around," Ms. Bill said. "We're looking at young lives here."

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/rcmp-arrest-whitehorse-youth-in-murder-of-first-nations-teen/article24169637/>

Aboriginal Education & Youth

Iqaluit teens share Inuit traditions with P.E.I. students

12 Nunavut high-schoolers paired with 12 Islanders in a cultural exchange

By Elyse Skura, [CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 25, 2015 9:31 AM CT Last Updated: Apr 25, 2015 3:50 PM CT



On Wednesday, students from northern and eastern Canada competed in a series of Inuit games, including the foot putl at Iqaluit's Inuksuk High School. (Tamara Pimentel/CBC)

Twelve teenagers from Prince Edward Island got a special introduction to Nunavut culture last week as they connected with their Iqaluit exchange partners through traditional food, sports and music.

And while their igloo building, throat singing and land excursions have been steeped in Inuit traditions, Inuksuk High School student Teresa Qiatsuk says this trip is just as much about the present and the future of Canada's newest territory.

"It's very important for them to know that we do live a very modern lifestyle, like we don't live in igloos or anything," explained the 17-year-old student.

"They've been reacting quite well."

The connection between this group of Islanders and the teens from Baffin Island is Brian Gillis, a teacher at Morell Regional High School in P.E.I., who worked in Iqaluit for several years.



Max Natanine and Teresa Qiatsuk demonstrate the arm pull at Inuksuk High School. The two 17-year-olds are among 12 Iqaluit students heading to P.E.I. this May. (Elyse Skura/CBC)

Todd Janes, who currently works at Inuksuk High School, says Gillis suggested the exchange, partly because he wanted to bring along his nine-year-old son, Kaden, an Inuk he adopted while living in Nunavut.

"He's kind of the trip's mascot," said Gillis.

'Taking everything in'

On Wednesday morning, the 12 students from P.E.I. and the 12 students from Nunavut faced off in some friendly traditional games, including the knuckle hop, the head pull, the muskox push and the one-foot high kick.

But the most memorable moment for many was building an igloo.

"They loved the fact that it was difficult to build it," said Max Natanine, a grade 12 student at Inuksuk High School. "And how you were supposed to manage living like that back in the day."



Todd Janes says the exchange between Iqaluit, Nunavut, and Morell, P.E.I., is a 'critical' opportunity for teenagers to learn about Canada. (Tamara Pimentel/CBC)

That part of the trip was also an important learning experience, according to Janes.

"Most of the groups had it almost completed. The top being the most difficult, it collapsed on a couple of them. But they were just relentless," said Janes.

"It's like the Inuit culture. They learn by trying and doing."

Bringing the north back with them

Shane Pendergast, a grade 11 student at Morell Regional High School, has been videotaping his experiences to share when he's back on the Island.

"I'm trying not to tell my family, so they'll get a surprise."

At the end of May, the Iqaluit students will head south to spend a week learning about the birthplace of Confederation.

"They're excited to swim in a pool again, they want to go on a zipline, probably a round of golf, we hope," said Janes. "They're going to do some tours and they're going to do some learning while they're there as well."

Students in both communities helped organize and fundraise for the exchange, which was formally set up by a non-profit called the Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges in Canada (SEVEC).

"The hope is that they'll forge lifelong friendships," said Janes. "It's off to a great start."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/iqaluit-teens-share-inuit-traditions-with-p-e-i-students-1.3047331>

John Abbott's Aboriginal Resource Centre a home away from home

Centre celebrates 25 years of assisting aboriginal students

By Marika Wheeler, [CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 29, 2015 6:00 AM ET Last Updated: Apr 29, 2015 8:26 AM ET



Inuk student, David Nassak says the Aboriginal Student Resource Centre has been key in helping him battle loneliness and find support during his first semester at John Abbott College. (Marika Wheeler/CBC)

Inuk student David Nassak left his community of 500 people a few months ago to study business administration among thousands of students at John Abbott College in Montreal.

For his entire life, he'd known the names of everyone around him. After the move, he discovered a strange new sense of isolation.

"There's a lot of people but for some reason you feel alone," he says.

Like many aboriginal students, Nassak found a new community at the school's Aboriginal Student Resource Centre, which today celebrates its 25th anniversary.



Mike O'Connor, pedagogical councillor, and Louise Legault, coordinator, have been working at the centre for eight years. (Marika Wheeler/CBC)

The centre organizes extracurricular workshops and activities as well as provide academic counseling and support to Aboriginal students.

Nassak says he made many friends at the centre, and spends some of his free time there playing chess. He's rarely able to beat the pedagogical coordinator at the centre, Mike O'Connor.

"Essentially we are there to help them get through, but to also help them become more independent and achieve success on their own," O'Connor says.

Celebration of Aboriginal culture and success

To mark the 25th anniversary of the centre, which started off as a resource center for Cree nursing students, a number of activities will be going on all day at the college common space, the Agora.

"Mainly we want to celebrate the students — all those [who] through the years came through here and graduated, or all those who didn't graduate, they all went back home and had learned something," says Louise Legault, the center's coordinator.

Xina Cowan, who organizes many of the student activities at the centre, says she hopes the anniversary will show the greater student population what great work is being done there.

"We're on the fourth floor in the corner. I don't know how much other non-indigenous students know about our centre," she says.

"It'll be a chance to expose it to everybody and say, 'Hey guys, this is what we are doing, [look] how awesome we are!'"



Inuk, Zoe Kroonenburg (left) , Mohawk JaymeLee Alfred (centre) and Youth Fusion Coordinator Xina Cowan (right) can be found most days at the Aboriginal Student Resource Centre. (Marika Wheeler/CBC)

Zoe Kroonenburg, an Inuk student from Kuujjuaraapik, says the coordinators at the centre have been invaluable during her time at John Abbott College.

She says leaving a small community to study in the south, where culture, language and academic expectations are vastly different, is very difficult.

"I love this place because everyone here knows what I'm going through," says Kroonenburg.

Celebrations on campus

During the celebrations, which begin at 11:30 a.m., students will perform throat singing and drumming as well as present a 14-minute film they made about how important the centre is to them.

'It's not really all about school here. It's like a family.' - *Student JaymeLee Alfred*

"It's not really all about school here. It's like a family" says JaymeLee Alfred, a Mohawk student who was very involved in making the film.

"If you think about at your home, you offer all these different qualities, and the centre does the same thing for us."

She says her favourite parts of the film are the responses they got from a half a dozen students who were asked to choose one word to describe their time at the college. Hers would be "memorable".

"I have so many moments that I'll take with me after this experience, and after graduation," she says, adding she hopes the friendships she has forged here will follow her through life.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/john-abbott-s-aboriginal-resource-centre-a-home-away-from-home-1.3050864>

Aboriginal Health

Judge amends ruling allowing aboriginal girl to go off chemo

Words saying the “best interests of the child must be paramount” have been added to the ruling for pre-teen J.J., who recently went back on chemo after her leukemia returned.



Justice Gethin Edward agreed Friday to amend his controversial ruling in the case of an aboriginal girl whose family wanted to take her off chemotherapy in order to pursue native or natural remedies. The family now agrees that conventional medicine could help their daughter, whose leukemia returned.

By: [Jacques Gallant](#) Staff Reporter, Published on Fri Apr 24 2015

BRANTFORD—[When Justice Gethin Edward ruled last year](#) that an aboriginal mother had a constitutional right to seek indigenous medicine for her 11-year-old daughter rather than chemotherapy, critics howled that he had failed to recognize that a child’s best interests trump all else.

In what one observer described as “backpedalling,” Edward issued an endorsement Friday amending his own ruling at the request of all parties, by including that “recognition and implementation of the right to use traditional medicines must remain consistent with the principle that the best interests of the child remain paramount.”

The move brings an end to litigation in the highly contentious case and follows months-long talks between the family of J.J., who cannot be named due to a publication ban, and the Ontario government, which began talks with the family after Edward's November ruling.

The amendment was absolutely necessary, but does nothing to make Edward's original ruling any more reasonable, said Amir Attaran, a law and medicine professor at the University of Ottawa. He said Friday's ruling constitutes "backpedalling."

"The November decision basically meant that aboriginal rights totally eclipsed the best interest of the child, and that's why the government really had no choice but to do something about this decision," he said.

"What the judgment now does is state there is an aboriginal right to health that includes choosing one's treatment, but it does place a limit on it by saying that the best interests of the child remain paramount..."

"The endorsement undoes the damage to the jurisprudence; however, it does not mean that Justice Edward ruled wisely (in November). Quite the opposite, his ruling was extremely unwise and inhumane."

Experts say that, should a similar case arise in future, Friday's amendment will make it even more likely that a hospital would win and have the child put back into treatment, while allowing him or her to continue seeking indigenous treatment as well.

J.J.'s case began last year, when McMaster Children's Hospital in Hamilton sought to have her deemed a child in need of protection after her mother pulled her out of chemotherapy treatment for acute lymphoblastic leukemia in August.

Physicians said J.J. had a very high chance of being cured if she continued with the medical treatment, but Brant Family and Children's Services did not believe J.J. was in need of protection.

Edward concluded in November that J.J.'s mother was exercising "her constitutionally protected right to pursue their traditional medicine," adding: "Such a right cannot be qualified as a right only if it is proven to work by employing the Western medical paradigm. To do so would be to leave open the opportunity to perpetually erode aboriginal rights."

The term "best interests of the child," which Attaran described as the "guiding principle," was not mentioned in the original decision.

J.J. and her family made their first appearance in court on Friday.

The 11-year-old girl could often be seen talking to relatives or looking at the floor as lawyers for the parties — the hospital, children's aid, Six Nations, J.J.'s family, the government and the Office of the Children's Lawyer — took turns praising the co-operation that led to Friday's decision and that averted a drawn-out and costly appeal.

She looked up briefly and offered a faint smile when counsel for the Attorney General offered her best wishes on behalf of the premier.

Court heard Friday that J.J.'s cancer returned in March. Her family's lawyer, Paul Williams, told the Star she was placed back on chemotherapy at that time, while continuing to receive indigenous treatment. He refused to provide any other details on her health.

"This clarification now allows the family to proceed, with peace of mind and privacy, with their daughter's treatment, using the best that both (indigenous and non-indigenous) medicines have to offer," reads a joint statement from the government, Six Nations and J.J.'s family.

Since Edward's November ruling, J.J. has had an "integrated health team" that involves both indigenous and non-indigenous treatment, according to a joint submission filed in court by all parties.

The team includes a doctor, a senior pediatric oncologist recommended by the government, and a Haudenosaunee chief who practises traditional medicine and was invited by the family.

[J.J. was the second Ontario aboriginal girl](#) taken off chemotherapy last year to pursue indigenous treatment, the first being Makayla Sault, an 11-year-old member of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.

Brant children's aid investigated Makayla's case, but decided she was not a child in need of protection. McMaster did not pursue legal action.

[Makayla died in January from a stroke](#) that her family blamed on the chemotherapy nearly a year earlier, although experts told the Star it was likely caused by a relapse of her cancer. [Her death is being investigated by the Ontario coroner.](#)

Direct Link: http://www.thestar.com/life/health_wellness/2015/04/24/judge-amends-controversial-ruling-allowing-aboriginal-girl-to-go-off-chemo.html

Ailing aboriginal girl now receiving both chemo and traditional medicine



Supporters of a Six Nations family seeking the right to decline chemotherapy treatments stand outside the Brantford, Ont., courthouse on Friday, Nov. 14, 2014. (Terry Kelly / CTV Kitchener)

Liam Casey, The Canadian Press

Published Friday, April 24, 2015 5:51PM EDT

BRANTFORD, Ont. -- An 11-year-old First Nations girl whose decision to refuse chemotherapy in favour of traditional aboriginal medicine caused an uproar last year is now receiving both treatments as she fights a rare form of leukemia.

A Brantford, Ont., judge, who ruled last November that as a First Nation person, the girl had the right to choose her health-care procedures, was back on the case Friday to provide a clarification of his original ruling, which many said would put the girl's life at risk.

"Implicit in this decision is that the recognition and implementation of the right to use traditional medicines must remain consistent with the principle that the best interests of the child remain paramount," said Justice Gethin Edward.

The "clarification" was requested by all parties involved, including the Ontario Attorney General's Office, in an effort to avoid dragging the girl's family through the courts.

Edward said he was struck by something the girl's mother said during the original trial.

"I will not let my baby die," she said at the time.

"Implicit in those seven words," the judge told court Friday, "was that regardless of what this court said or did, or anyone else for that matter, what was paramount for the mother was what was in her daughter's best interests."

Last September, the girl's mother removed her from a hospital in Hamilton where she was undergoing chemotherapy treatment, and took her to a controversial Florida centre that promotes alternative treatments.

That decision prompted the McMaster Children's Hospital to take the Brant Family and Children's Services to court, seeking to have the child apprehended and placed back into chemotherapy.

The judge dismissed the hospital's application in November, saying traditional aboriginal treatments were in existence before First Nations communities were in contact with Europeans, and were consequently entitled to special protection in Canada.

In January, the family claimed the girl's cancer had gone into remission and that she was doing well. But court heard Friday that the cancer returned in March and the girl is now undergoing both aboriginal medical treatment as well as chemotherapy.

The girl, whose name can not be revealed, smiled in court when the judge came over to speak to her family.

Her case and that of another cancer-stricken First Nations girl who died in January after refusing chemotherapy, sparked a national conversation on aboriginal peoples' right to opt out of the health-care system.

At the end of Friday's hearing, all the lawyers involved in the case, who represented the family, the hospital, the Brant Family and Children's Services, the girl's Six Nations community and the attorney general, thanked each other for working together to find a resolution.

"In some way it's a lesson to lawyers and governments that this can be done," said the family's lawyer, Paul Williams.

"The same thing is true for the two systems of medicine."

Williams said after court that the girl is now receiving both aboriginal medicine and "western" medicine, but wouldn't elaborate on her prognosis or where he's receiving treatment.

The family did not comment after the hearing.

The girl's mother said in February at a conference on aboriginal medicine that she had met with provincial government officials and they have been "respectful and compassionate."

"The issue is not whether traditional medicine will be respected, but how it will be respected and how and when the two systems can work together," she said at the time.

"The two systems have taught each other and learned from each other for nearly 400 years -- they share medicines and they have the same purpose."

Direct Link: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/health/ailing-aboriginal-girl-now-receiving-both-chemo-and-traditional-medicine-1.2343898>

First Nations hope for concrete steps from AG's health care report

[Jesse Winter More from Jesse Winter](#)

Published on: April 27, 2015

Last Updated: April 27, 2015 4:49 PM EDT



Auditor General of Canada Michael Ferguson.

Northern First Nations chiefs are anxiously awaiting the Auditor General's report on access to health care in their remote communities.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler says the report, to be tabled Tuesday, will highlight what his people have been saying for years.

"Health Canada has been making it more and more difficult for our communities to access even things that a lot of Canadians take for granted, things like physiotherapy, treatment and rehab, even speech therapy for children," Fiddler said.

"There needs to be meaningful action taken on the part of the federal government to improve the situation," he said.

According to Health Canada reports, aboriginal Canadians suffer twice as many strokes as non-aboriginal Canadians and have heart attacks nearly 20-per-cent more often. The infant mortality rate on reserves is nearly double the Canadian average. Aboriginal youth are 11 times more likely to kill themselves than non-aboriginal youth.

And much of that is worse in remote communities, Fiddler said. The biggest challenges are wait times and getting approvals for medical travel, he said.

"Things like medical escorts, which a lot of these people would require, there are a lot of barriers that they have to overcome," he said.

An inquest is underway this week in Manitoba into the 2011 death of two-month-old Drianna Ross. She died of septic shock at Thompson General Hospital three days after her parents brought her to the nursing station in the remote First Nations community of Gods Lake Narrows. Her parents brought her in because she had a fever. Staff at the nursing station originally told her parents to give her Tylenol and sent her home.

Three days later, her parents returned to the nursing station three times, asking for help. That fever turned out to be a virulent bacterial infection. By the time she was flown to the hospital, it was too late to save her.

The Auditor General's spring report examined whether Health Canada provides reasonable assurances that First Nations people in remote Manitoba and Ontario communities have access to medical transport and clinic services in their communities.

Fiddler said while the situation is dire in many northern communities, he's hopeful that Tuesday's report will include recommendations that the government takes seriously. Specifically, he wants to see a promise that the federal government will implement legislation to expand Jordan's Principal across the country.

Jordan's Principal refers to an NDP motion, unanimously supported in the House of Commons in 2007, that guarantees First Nations children have access to timely medical care regardless of political jurisdictional disputes.

It's named for Jordan River Anderson, a First Nations child who died after spending two years in hospital because government officials could not decide who should pay for his at-home care.

But Fiddler says in the eight years since the motion was passed, there has been virtually no effort made by the government to implement much-needed changes.

He also wants to see improvements to the Non-Insured Health Benefits, a federal program that covers the cost of some drugs, medical supplies and short-term crisis intervention for First Nations people.

And he's hoping for some measures to address the high rates of youth suicide in many aboriginal communities.

"The system needs to be designed not just for crisis but in the longer term as well," he said.

Correction: An earlier version of this story misidentified Nishnawbe Aski Nation Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler. It should also have noted that Jordan's Principal was introduced as an NDP motion.

Direct Link: <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/first-nations-hope-for-concrete-steps-from-ags-health-care-report>

First Nations kids deserve the same protection as others: Editorial

Aboriginal rights must be taken into account in any analysis of the best interests of a child who needs medical care, a judge says. But at the end of the day the child's welfare trumps other considerations.



Justice Gethin Edward's clarification of his earlier troubling ruling is welcome.

Published on Mon Apr 27 2015

No parent or guardian in Canada should have the right to deny life-saving medical treatment to a child in their care. And First Nations parents are no exception. Aboriginal children deserve the same protection as any others. And the state has an interest in seeing that they get it.

So it's a relief that an Ontario judge, Justice Gethin Edward, has [just reaffirmed that basic principle](#) by "clarifying" a troubling ruling he issued last year in the heart-wrenching case of J.J., an 11-year-old Haudenosaunee girl with cancer. At the time Edward ruled that her mother had a constitutional right to rely on traditional indigenous medicine instead of chemotherapy.

The decision created a furor with critics saying that, contrary to Edward's finding, J.J. was a child in need of society's protection from a well-meaning but misguided parent; that the ruling was an unwelcome precedent that put native children at risk; and that Queen's Park should appeal.

Now, in a rare move that came [at the request of the Ontario Attorney-General's office](#), family lawyers and everyone else with an interest in the case, Edward has issued a statement "clarifying" his original ruling.

He maintains that First Nations have "the right to use traditional medicines." But in what amounts to a major caveat he added on Friday that the right to do so "must remain consistent with the principle that the best interests of the child remain paramount." Aboriginal rights must be taken into account, "among other factors," he said, in any analysis of the best interests of the child, and whether the child is in need of protection." Still, at the end of the day the child's welfare trumps other considerations.

Whether this qualifies as a clarification, amendment, walk back or full-blown climbdown, it puts children's aid societies and other authorities on firm notice that they must not let aboriginal rights eclipse a child's best interest. That's an important qualifier.

But welcome as Edward's clarification is, it makes the original ruling all the harder to fathom. If J.J.'s "best interests" were indeed paramount, and aboriginal rights only a secondary factor among others, how were her best interests served by denying her the court's protection and medical treatment that could save her life?

This doesn't bolster confidence in the wisdom of the original ruling.

J.J.'s case began last year when McMaster Children's Hospital in Hamilton sought to have her declared a child in need of protection after her mother pulled her out of chemo treatment for acute leukemia. J.J. "lacked the capacity" to make life-and-death decisions herself. Doctors said she had a very high chance of being cured if she continued with the chemo.

But Brant Family and Children's Services did not believe J.J. needed protection. [Edward found in the mother's favour](#), saying she was exercising "her constitutionally protected right to pursue their traditional medicine." The family took J.J. to a clinic in Florida that featured such treatments as positive thinking, raw foods, foot baths and vitamin injections.

In another similar case, an Ojibwe girl, Makayla Sault, also 11, was taken off chemo last year to get indigenous care and treatment at the same Florida clinic. In her case Brant officials said she was capable of making her own decisions. She died earlier this year.

When J.J.'s cancer resurfaced in March she was put back on chemo while continuing to get indigenous treatment. A team of physicians and a native healer now cares for her. This approach, combining the best modern medical care with due regard for aboriginal tradition, should serve as a template.

If nothing else, this is a sharp reminder to the courts and children's aid alike that native children deserve no less protection than any others. No parent in Canada has the right to harm a child, whether by abusing them or denying needed medical care. That principle should be more aggressively asserted and applied in future disputes of this sort.

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorials/2015/04/27/first-nations-kids-deserve-the-same-protection-as-others-editorial.html>

Judge's ruling a win for common sense and aboriginal children

The Globe and Mail

Published Monday, Apr. 27 2015, 7:00 PM EDT

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Wisdom has prevailed, for once. “J.J.,” an 11-year-old girl who lives in the Six Nations reserve in Ontario and is suffering from leukemia, will now receive both chemotherapy and traditional aboriginal medicine, rather than becoming the subject of a long conflict in the courts.

Last November, Justice Gethin Edward of the Ontario Court of Justice made an extraordinary decision, in which – to all appearances at the time – he held that the recognition of aboriginal and treaty rights in the Constitution Act, 1982, meant that an aboriginal child, together with her parents, could refuse medical treatment for her potentially fatal disease – in direct contradiction to medical advice and to the court’s own responsibility to protect children, even against the will of their parents.

For a time, J.J.’s mother took her to a commercial holistic healing centre in Florida, with little or no connection to either modern or traditional medicine.

But on its face, that section of the Constitution Act has nothing to do with medical treatment, aboriginal or conventional.

After that, Makayla Sault, another 11-year-old aboriginal girl, died in January. She had lived in another Ontario reserve, but, in an uncanny coincidence, she was also suffering from leukemia, and she and her parents did not want to continue her chemotherapy treatment at the same hospital, in Hamilton. In both cases, the regional Children’s Aid Society had been unwilling to try hard to bring the children back to the hospital.

These events rightly aroused vigorous indignation. There were calls for an appeal by the provincial government, which might well have taken too long to save J.J.’s life. Meanwhile, after a time of remission, her leukemia returned in March. She and her family sensibly chose to resume the chemotherapy.

Justice Edward has now agreed to clarify his decision, so that the court’s authority over children in need of protection will be reaffirmed. The reworded judgment is convoluted – as in many negotiated settlements – but there is little reason to believe that the court’s “parent of the country” power will emerge severely damaged.

The episode is still partly a tragedy. J.J now has real hope, but nothing will bring Makayla Sault back to life.

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/editorials/judges-ruling-a-win-for-common-sense-and-aboriginal-children/article24145780/>

Auditor cites failure in aboriginal health



The Canadian Press, 2015

Auditor General Michael Ferguson speaks at a news conference in Ottawa on Tuesday, April 28, 2015 following the tabling of his spring report to Parliament. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Adrian Wyld

OTTAWA - The quality of health care in remote First Nations communities is sorely lacking, the federal auditor general reported Tuesday — a conclusion that aboriginal leaders call a further indictment of how they are being treated by Ottawa.

Health Canada can't be sure that eligible First Nations members in remote parts of Manitoba and Ontario can access sufficient clinical and client care services and medical transportation, Michael Ferguson's spring report says.

The audit concluded that only one out of 45 nurses had completed mandatory Health Canada training to allow them to perform advanced duties such as immunization, cardiac life support and handling controlled substances — a problem the federal department identified in 2010.

It also documented the dismal state of nursing stations in the regions, noting that in one case, a nursing station residence had been unusable for more than two years because of a broken septic system.

The report also found nurses had no support system in place when required to perform essential health services beyond their scope of practice. It also uncovered problems with the medical transportation system that allows patients to receive treatment that's only available outside their communities.

Some First Nations members were not properly registered for the transport benefit, and there was also a glaring lack of documentation to show that the health care was actually needed or delivered.

Ferguson's findings are not news to vulnerable people who have long struggled to obtain access to basic health care, said Nishnawbe Aski Nation Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler.

"The report is a strong indictment on Canada's continued failure to provide a health care system that is equitable, that is accessible," Fiddler said.

He said a pair of four-year-olds — a boy and a girl — died needlessly last year from strep throat, which could have been prevented with simple antibiotics.

Health Canada agreed with the auditor's recommendations to fix those deficiencies, a development that the Liberal health critic, Dr. Carolyn Bennett, said could finally lead to progress.

"They're now on record as to what they do about it," Bennett said. "It's a very straightforward process now, and we need to see the plan from Health Canada."

Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Grand Chief David Harper said he hoped Ferguson's report would pave the way for gains in education and prevention to increase the long-term health of remote communities.

"At the same time, we need to educate our youth to become nurses and doctors."

In separate audits included in Tuesday's report, Ferguson also touched on some key planks of the government's likely election platform — cutting taxes and protecting Canadians by getting tougher with criminals.

The auditor found lacklustre efforts to rehabilitate prisoners and a dearth of oversight governing boutique tax credits, the Conservative government's election bauble of choice.

"We are concerned that the issues we are seeing today may be the symptoms of bigger problems in the future if they are not addressed quickly," Ferguson said.

Ferguson found that lower-risk offenders are being released from prison later in their sentences and with less time supervised in the community because Correctional Service Canada recommends early release less often.

Some 80 per cent of offenders were behind bars beyond their first parole eligibility date, while more offenders are being released directly from medium- and high-security penitentiaries.

A separate audit of Correctional Services Canada appeared to dovetail with the Conservative government's tough-on-crime agenda, but stressed the safety of the public is better served by a system than can offer rehabilitation before an inmate is set free.

It found that CSC officials made fewer recommendations for early release to the Parole Board in 2013-14 than in 2011-12, including low-risk offenders, who as a result ended up spending less time being supervised in the community before their sentences ended.

The audit said only one in five offenders had parole hearings when they were first eligible, while 54 per cent walked out of federal prisons at their statutory release date rather than being on parole earlier in their sentence.

The supervised release of offenders "who have demonstrated responsibility to change contributes to public safety," it found.

But a spokesman for Public Safety Minister Steven Blaney said in an email: "I am pleased that the auditor general found that our 'truth in sentencing' measures have worked because more prisoners are staying behind bars for a greater portion of their sentence."

Direct Link: <http://www.therecord.com/news-story/5590221-auditor-cites-failure-in-aboriginal-health/>

Lawyers say aboriginal judge behind unusual chemotherapy ruling has reputation as 'very fair'

[National Post, Tom Blackwell](#) | April 28, 2015 | Last Updated: Apr 28 9:20 AM ET



Six Nations supporters celebrate in front of Brantford's Ontario Court of Justice after Judge Gethin Edward dismissed a CAS request to force a 11-year-old aboriginal girl to receive chemotherapy, Nov. 13, 2014.

It was, from the start, a strange case, involving a hospital suing a children's aid society to force an aboriginal child with leukemia back into chemotherapy.

It ended on a no-less unorthodox note Friday, when Justice Gethin Edward agreed to modify his original ruling — five months after the fact — and then wandered down from the bench and did a meet-and-greet with the young patient and various other figures involved in the drawn-out case.

“I see the gang’s all here,” he had said to them with a smile earlier.

Edward was assigned the case by chance last year, but it seems to have been a natural fit for a judge who has quietly built a reputation in Brantford, Ont., as fair, intelligent and attuned to the area’s large aboriginal population — even if it sometimes means courting controversy.

Not only is he an actual member of the Six Nations reserve where the cancer patient — an 11-year-old known as J.J. — lives, but he helped found a special court for First Nations people caught up in the criminal justice system, and once oversaw a native rehab facility.

Edward also ushered in the holding of eagle feathers as an alternative to swearing on the bible in Brantford, and caused a stir when he temporarily banished Canadian and Ontario flags from his courtroom to placate an aboriginal witness.

“The same old, same old, regardless of whether you’re aboriginal or non-aboriginal, isn’t really working,” Edward was quoted as saying when the native court opened last year. “We’ve tried putting people in jail and throwing away the key but, at the end of the day, is there any evidence that it works?”

What brought the small-town judge to national attention, though, was his decision last November that J.J.’s mother had a constitutional right to seek traditional aboriginal remedies — even if it meant pulling the girl from chemotherapy.

‘This was a very emotionally charged case, when you think of the issues and the parties. He was able to keep tensions and emotions from boiling over in the courtroom’

It would not have been an easy ruling to deliver, suggests Howard Staats, who gave Edward his first job at a Brantford law firm and worked beside him for 14 years.

“I think it took a lot of fortitude, intestinal fortitude to come up with the decision,” Staats said Monday. “I think he knew it was not going to be a popular decision. But I think that’s the way he saw the law, and a judge is there to enforce the law.”

Indeed, the judgment outraged many observers in the non-native world, while being hailed as an overdue recognition of traditional ways in First Nations communities.

Also revealed Friday was that J.J.’s leukemia had returned, and she was again being treated both with chemo and traditional medicine. Another native girl, from a reserve next to Six Nations, died earlier this year after she similarly pulled out of chemotherapy in favour of alternative health care. Edward was not involved in that case.

The latest hearing came after the Ontario government belatedly got involved in J.J.’s case five months ago.

Lawyers for the province, the family, Six Nations and others hammered together a deal — accepted by the judge — that modified the ruling to state the interests of the child must be paramount, but aboriginal healing still respected.

Edward stickhandled the complex case authoritatively both in the months after his ruling, and during the original trial, said Mark Handelman, a lawyer who represented the local children's aid society.

"This was a very emotionally charged case, when you think of the issues and the parties," he said. "He was able to keep tensions and emotions from boiling over in the courtroom."

According to the University of Saskatchewan's Program for Legal Studies for Native People, the judge's path into law began with the program's eight-week summer course in 1977, designed to prepare aboriginal students for the rigours of legal education.

It was a few years after he graduated from Western University's law school in London, Ont., that he officially was granted First Nations status, thanks to changes in the Indian Act, according to one online biography. The Act had stripped certain people of First Nations status, including women who married non-natives.

Yet as Edward settled into a combined criminal and family-law practice with Staats, his First Nations identity seemed to play little role, said the lawyer.

"I don't know if everybody knew that he was, in fact, aboriginal," said Staats, who is also of native background.

Even when Edward joined the bench in 1996, his nods to the First Nations community were likely more a recognition of the major aboriginal presence in the area than a product of his own heritage, suggested his former partner. Six Nations is Canada's largest reserve.

The 1998 flag removal did prompt an *Ottawa Citizen* editorial to call Edward a "rogue judge" who had agreed to "exile the symbols of his own legitimacy." As president of the National Citizens Coalition then, Stephen Harper reportedly urged that Edward be fired.

The judge, however, said at the time that he had meant no offence, feels deep pride in the flag and only wanted to ensure the court heard from an important witness who refused to testify otherwise.

Last year, he spearheaded the opening of a so-called Gladue Court, versions of which exist in several other cities, too. They stem from a 1999 Supreme Court of Canada ruling that said judges should consider the often-tumultuous personal backgrounds of aboriginal accused, and seek alternatives to prison time if possible.

Staats now appears before his former acolyte and, while not always agreeing with his decisions, says his local reputation is rock solid.

“He’s considered to be very fair, very reasonable. And he knows the law.”

Direct Link: <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/lawyers-say-aboriginal-judge-behind-unusual-chemotherapy-ruling-has-reputation-as-very-fair>

City and community groups hold talks over construction of Aboriginal healing centres

by [Peter Mothe](#) on April 28th, 2015 at 1:22 PM



Brody Williams is one of the community organizers who wants an Aboriginal healing and wellness centre in the Downtown Eastside. Peter Mothe

Community organizers and Vancouver city officials are in talks over the construction of several Aboriginal healing and wellness centres to be located throughout the city.

What these centres will look like and where they will be built remains unclear, but Vancouver deputy mayor Andrea Reimer says the city is dedicated to their construction.

“We are committed to a spectrum of options being available city-wide for urban aboriginal people,” Reimer told the *Straight* over the phone.

For the past year, an advisory group has been gathering to discuss the project, which is mandated under the City of Reconciliation declaration, the task force for mental health and addiction, and the Downtown Eastside local area plan.

“We’ve been doing consultations for a year now with a working group that has residents, aboriginal service providers, Coastal Health, and the First Nations Health Authority,” Reimer said.

According to her, the diversity of voices that exist in the community means that there are many opinions on what potential facilities will include and where they should be located.

So far, the city has partnered with community organizations to secure the construction of two healing centres—one at the Urban Native Youth Association (1618 East Hastings Street) and the other at Lu’ma Native Housing (25 West 6th Avenue).

The UNYA location will focus on aboriginal youth and is slated to open this summer, while construction has yet to begin on the new facilities at Lu’ma.

“Both models will incorporate traditional practices,” said Reimer, adding that the new facilities will also include mainstream medical practices.

This last detail is a point of contention amongst community organizers.

Brody Williams, a First Nations activist who works in the Downtown Eastside, says these types of centres already exist. Although they’re valuable, Williams says, they aren’t what the community needs.

“We already have that at our disposal now. What we want is a holistic treatment centre,” he said.

Williams and other activists believe that a new centre should be located in the Downtown Eastside, and should be entirely devoted to the use of traditional healing practices to treat addiction.

“We want a First Nations traditional healing centre that would be First Nations owned and operated,” Williams said.

He added that talks with city officials have been dragging on for too long, and that an Aboriginal healing and wellness facility in the DTES is “long overdue.”

“Now is the time to put pressure on the powers that be and get this healing centre started,” he said.

Reimer says that the Downtown Eastside project is advancing.

“The challenge is that our partners don’t have an off-the-shelf model that they can point to. This would be a new thing that would be done, and it takes more time to figure out how you can develop something from scratch that hasn’t been done before,” she said.

In the next few weeks, city officials will be mapping areas in the Downtown Eastside where people are already using traditional healing practices.

“We don’t want to replicate or inadvertently divert resources away from things that are working well in the community,” Reimer said.

Peter Mothe is an intern at the Georgia Straight and a graduate student at UBC's school of journalism. You can follow him on [Twitter](#).

Direct Link: <http://www.straight.com/news/439861/city-and-community-groups-hold-talks-over-construction-aboriginal-healing-centres>

Edmonton woman pens graphic novel about aboriginal gang violence and healing

Author used her experience as counsellor to craft main character

By Isabelle Gallant, [CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 28, 2015 6:00 PM MT Last Updated: Apr 29, 2015 7:04 AM MT



Author Patti Laboucane-Benson and illustrator Kelly Mellings have worked together on projects before, *The Outside Circle* is their latest collaboration. (The Outside Circle/Kelly Mellings)

The Edmonton author of a graphic novel hopes young aboriginal people will find hope and healing through her story.

Patti Laboucane-Benson wrote *The Outside Circle*, now available in some stores, in collaboration with illustrator Kelly Mellings

It's the story of Pete, a young aboriginal man wrapped up in gang life in Edmonton who winds up in jail and, through a unique healing program, realizes he needs to make changes in his life.

"Pete's story is a story that's pretty common," said Laboucane-Benson, "even the healing story is getting to be more common."

Laboucane-Benson has worked for Native Counselling Services of Alberta for nearly two decades and based the book on the work and research she's done on historic trauma healing programs.



Illustrator Kelly Mellings and author Patti Laboucane-Benson's book *The Outside Circle* is available in stores across Canada.

"(Pete) is a composite of so many men and women I've met or worked with," said Laboucane-Benson reflecting on the main character in the book.

In the novel, Pete comes to learn about the struggles of aboriginal people in Canada due to colonization, and also discovers his own family history.

"My goal in this book was to tell the truth, whether it was an ex-gang member that picked it up or someone from the government who's in charge of policy."

Rather than publishing something academic or writing a textbook, Laboucane-Benson wanted to create a graphic novel so her research could appeal to more people.

The idea of making the story of residential school trauma more accessible to the public also interested Edmonton illustrator, Kelly Mellings who agreed to illustrate the book with the hope that *The Outside Circle* can help clear up prejudices.

Artist immersed himself in aboriginal culture



A page from Patti Laboucane-Benson's graphic novel *The Outside Circle*. (The Outside Circle)

"You often get in conversations about things and you hear the same kind of arguments from people who only know one side, like, why doesn't that guy just get a job, or why are there so many Native people in jails?," he said.

"I could give (this book) to them and say, read this, maybe think about this."

Mellings immersed himself in aboriginal culture as preparation to illustrate the book. He visited the remote Northern community of Tlicho, N.W.T., to teach drawing classes to aboriginal children. He also participated in sweats and smudge ceremonies, and toured a former residential school.

"I was just imagining my own daughter being taken away from home, from her culture and being yelled at like that," he said. "You don't realize how close to home it is and how recently all that stuff has happened."

Mellings said he felt a lot of pressure as a white man to do justice to Pete's story.

"You want to get it right. I took a very long time on the book. In the end I think the work gets to where it needs to be for the subject matter."

Laboucane-Benson said Mellings' work brings the graphic novel to life.

"I think there's a profound feeling of spiritualism and pain, grief, and loss -- all of that was communicated so beautifully by Kelly," she said. "That's a very difficult thing to do if I was to describe that in a regular novel."

Laboucan-Benson said she hopes the book will be used across Canada in high schools and universities.

"My goal was to write this for my son's generation," she said.

"There should not be this divide between First People and the rest of Canada. We've got to come together and work together."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/edmonton-woman-pens-graphic-novel-about-aboriginal-gang-violence-and-healing-1.3052758>

Former addict from Regina says First Nations elder, teachings saved her life

Elder Archie Weenie welcomes everyone to cultural awareness camp near Regina this Friday to Sunday

By Nichole Huck, [CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 29, 2015 6:00 AM CT Last Updated: Apr 29, 2015 12:01 PM CT

Father and son Archie and Curtis Weenie want to bring traditional First Nations culture and teachings to people from the city. The duo founded [Open Sky retreat](#) in 2008 and put on regular cultural awareness camps.

Weenie says they chose the name Open Sky because they are open to everyone.

Before moving to Regina, Elder Weenie spent the past 20 years on the Sweetgrass First Nation near North Battleford.

Weenie said he can relate to people who are spiritually sick and struggling to make a life in the city.

"It takes me back in time to when I was hurting. I connected with his kindness, I went back to my road and I've been walking that path ever since."

The Weenies started with a single sweat lodge out on the bare prairie, completely at the mercy of the weather. They have now built a permanent sweat lodge building just outside Regina so people can experience ceremonies year-round.

"Some people never experience any kind of ceremony and that's why they are lost. That's why I do this to try and connect them some way. Hey, there is a lot of hope," Elder Weenie said.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/former-addict-from-regina-says-first-nations-elder-teachings-saved-her-life-1.3052730>

Aboriginal History

Study sheds new light on origins of Arctic inhabitants

By [Dene Moore](#) / [Daily Brew](#) – 3 hours ago



People walk along a path in Iqaluit, Nunavut on Tuesday, December 9, 2014. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Sean Kilpatrick

The Arctic was the last region on earth to be colonized by humans and many of its mysteries endure.

Now a new study sheds some light on the human history of the land, thanks to modern DNA technology.

“We’re trying to learn more about the origins and the ancestral ties between human populations that migrated into Canada and Greenland several thousand years ago, with populations further west in Alaska,” says Geoffrey Hayes, a geneticist at Northwestern University in Illinois and one of the authors of the study.

Archeologists have long held that the North Slope of Alaska was the most likely place that those first inhabitants entered the Arctic some 4,500 years ago.

The DNA study by Hayes and his colleagues bolsters the case. It's the first evidence that genetically ties Inupiat and Inuit populations throughout Alaska, Canada and Greenland back to the North Slope.

The study, published in the American Journal of Physical Anthropology, found a genetic link to both the Paleo- and Neo-Eskimos that inhabited the land before European contact with today's Inupiat population of the North Slope. Nowhere else did they find the DNA remnants of those first settlers, including the Dorset people that once lived in the Canadian Arctic.

That suggests that the North Slope served as a central repository for two waves of migration, from the North Slope and east to Canada and beyond.

The team gathered mitochondrial DNA - the strand inherited from the mother - from 151 residents of eight different Inupiat communities on the North Slope of Alaska. They compared them to other Inuit populations in Siberia, the Aleutian Islands, Canada, and Greenland.

The research was invited by the local Inupiat of Barrow, Alaska.

As global warming tightened its grip on the Arctic, pushing the pack ice further from land, remnants of a pre-historic village near Barrow were being lost as the earth eroded into the ocean.

Worried that these rare clues to Arctic history would be lost forever, the Inupiat community invited archeologists and then geneticists to help them rebury the human remains and unlock the mysteries within.

"There was an interest from the local community that, as long as archeological work was going on to recover these remains, that it was an opportunity to perform scientific studies to learn a little bit more about these ancestors," says Hayes, who originally hails from the Edmonton area.

The results confirm what archeologists have long found, he says - that there were two waves of migration.

The first, about 4,500 years ago, were the Paleo-Eskimos. The second, about 800 years ago, were the Neo-Eskimos that are genetically indistinguishable from Inuit today.

The Neo-Eskimos, which included the Thule, had more advanced technology. With kayaks and tools, they hunted whales.

The Neo-Eskimos quickly adapted to and adopted the Arctic as their home. Within a few hundred years - "on the time-scale of the archeological record - practically overnight" - the ancestors of modern-day Inuit had spread from the North Slope to Greenland.

The genetic profiles also bolster the case for a back migration.

It would be expected that the people who are closer geographically would be closer genetically to one another, Hayes says.

“What we actually find is that the people of the Alaskan North Slope show a higher degree of similarity with populations in Greenland than they do with some of their own Canadian neighbours,” he says.

It’s something the Inupiat and Inuit already suspected.

“On more than one occasion we had participants of our study tell us that they could understand the Greenland dialects better than they could understand the Canadian dialects,” Hayes says.

There are ongoing studies looking at the Y chromosomes, which males inherit from their fathers, and the nuclear DNA markers that make up the remainder of the genome.

Those will help paint a fuller picture of a fascinating people.

“The North American Arctic is one of the very last places that gets colonized by humans,” Hayes says. “It’s a very difficult place to make a living and feed your family... but they figured out how to do it and were quite successful at it.”

Direct Link: <https://ca.news.yahoo.com/blogs/dailybrew/the-arctic-was-the-last-region-on-earth-to-be-165234394.html>

Aboriginal Identity & Representation

Aboriginal students, staff at McGill University call for more recognition

Monument recognizing campus was built on aboriginal territory often goes unnoticed

[CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 23, 2015 9:46 PM ET Last Updated: Apr 23, 2015 10:49 PM ET



Hochelaga Rock is the only monument recognizing that McGill University sits on aboriginal territory. (CBC)

Some students and staff at McGill University say the school isn't doing enough to include aboriginal people.

The university only has one monument, Hochelaga Rock, to acknowledge that the campus was built on the site of an old Iroquois village and likely visited by Jacques Cartier in the 1500s.

But the rock marking this history goes largely unnoticed.

"I have no idea [what it is] I've never paid attention to it unfortunately," said McGill student Mohammad Reza Gholipour, who walks by the rock every day.

"I think it should be promoted in a better way. I had no idea."



Kakwiranoron Cook, McGill's aboriginal outreach administrator, says the school needs to do a better job of highlighting its campus's native roots. (CBC)

Kakwiranoron Cook, McGill's aboriginal outreach administrator, would like to see the university put up a more noticeable monument.

"We're the most under-represented of any group at the university, whether you're talking about students, staff or faculty," Cook said.

McGill currently has fewer than 200 aboriginal students, and no indigenous professors have tenure.

Cook said aboriginal students would feel more at home if there were more recognition that the campus sits on native territory.

"It helps with our collective healing and reconciling our differences, to really acknowledge and really move forward together," Cook said, adding that things are improving, but slowly.

Students say action should be taken more swiftly.

"It was just this year that our Indigenous Studies Minor was launched. So we are quite far behind a lot of other schools that have had indigeneous studies programs since the 60s-70s," said Claire Stewart-Kanigan, vice-president of university affairs at the Student Society of McGill University.

Students have written letters calling for the rock to be moved to a more prominent spot.

"It would be very meaningful for the community. A lot of bang for your buck if you will. But it's been on the agenda for the last five years at least, and there hasn't been any meaningful action taken on it," Stewart-Kanigan said.

University officials told CBC Montreal that they are considering building a path that leads to the rock.

A committee is also meeting to come up with a proposal for other tributes to McGill's aboriginal history.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/aboriginal-students-staff-at-mcgill-university-call-for-more-recognition-1.3046821>

Aboriginal civic names a rarity in Regina

More interest going forward

By Natascia Lypny, The Leader-Post April 27, 2015



Wascana Park is one of the few places in Regina with a name of First Nations or Metis origins.

Only a handful of public spaces in Regina are named after First Nations and Metis people, places, groups or words.

Of the most recent list of 1,404 names for streets and parks, only 15 bear First Nations or Metis origins, according to city records. Those include the muchreferenced Wascana, and specific figures like Louis Riel's adviser Maxime Lepine and Sherry Farrell Racette of the First Nations University of Canada.

The Civic Naming Committee has also approved 23 other names for use, which are part of a larger list of about 390 that developers can choose from as they add streets and parks to new neighbourhoods.

Committee member Dana Turgeon said that a few years ago the city put out a call for First Nations and Metis name submissions, as well as researched some itself.

First Nations and Metis names for public buildings are scant, too.

"Explore the origins of Regina's street and parknames. Click on the red dots for information. The information provided is ascomplete as possible provided the City of Regina's database, and thelimitations of the map locator. Note that streets and parks that share the samename origin only appear once on the map. This map was created using the StreetWhere You Live List created by the city. Contains information licensed underthe Open Government License - City of Regina."

Two weeks ago, the Cree word for "let's all be together," Mamaweyatitan, was revealed as the name of the under-construction North Central Shared Facility.

North Central Community Association president Joely BigEagle-Kequahtoway sat on the naming committee with linguist elders who she said insisted the name retain its Cree spelling.

"It's a time to begin reclaiming our language and those names, and this is a good beginning," she said.

"Naming ceremonies are important in our culture and I think that's a tradition that should continue with some of the parks and the buildings coming up," she added.

BigEagle-Kequahtoway has also considered whether renaming North Central would be appropriate, given that the current name "doesn't have any ownership to it" and names are "reflective of how you feel in your environment."

Many of the neighbourhood's residents are aboriginal, and BigEagle-Kequahtoway mused over a name referencing the buffalo that once roamed the area.

As part of its indigenization strategy, the University of Regina will be renaming some locations on campus.

Executive lead Shauneen Pete would like to see the same consideration of Regina's original peoples at the city level.

"As a child, if you're growing up in the city there's very few references to anything indigenous here. You have to go searching for them," said the Regina-raised woman.

"The use of indigenous languages in some of the signages, things like Wascana for example," which is anglicized from the Cree word *oscana*, "it gets lost and it gets repositioned through that colonial narrative and it almost gets taken up as if it were a Euro word."

Pete said that names, and signs in particular, are significant, "because it's the physical reminder of our collective narrative. To be able as a child, as you're walking through Regina, to see a reference point to something that's from your community of origin is an incredibly powerful affirmation of our identities, our histories and our ways of knowing."

BigEagle-Kequahtoway and Pete aren't the only ones who are eager to see their background better represented in Regina's public spaces.

The city's in-progress Cultural Heritage Management Strategy, drafted through public consultations, stresses the desire for more indigenous spaces in the city beyond place names and signs in First Nations, Metis and Inuit languages. It notes, for instance, the need for a central gathering place.

The city's draft Cultural Plan, which is in its second round of public consultations, also sets out goals related to identifying locations for aboriginal ceremonies, and increasing aboriginal culture and history in public art and urban design. nlypny@leaderpost.com
twitter.com/wordpuddle

How the city gets its names

Anyone can submit a name for a street or park in Regina.

The Civic Naming Committee meets to review recommendations every three months or so. If the name meets the city's criteria, it goes on a list from which developers choose. To be eligible, a person must have resided in Regina for 10 years or more and have contributed to the community by:

- * Being an elected government official for at least two terms;
- * Serving as a member of a public board; † Volunteering for community organizations;
- * Making a significant contribution to Regina in a variety of fields; or
- * Contributing to the development of Regina as a pioneer between 1882 and 1903.

Some people are eligible even if they haven't resided in Regina for 10 years:

- * Saskatchewan First Nations or Metis leaders who fall into one of the above categories;
- * Late mayors or city councillors who served at least six years;
- * Canadian prime ministers elected while representing Saskatchewan;
- * Aboriginal people who historically called the Regina Plains home; and
- * Former Saskatchewan premiers.

The committee also considers a number of other recommendations, like:

- * British monarchy or royal family references; † Saskatchewan references, like historic events, ecological elements and communities;
- * Local recipients of civilian medals for acts of bravery and courage; and
- * First responders who have risked their lives to help others.

Direct Link:

<http://www.leaderpost.com/Aboriginal+civic+names+rarity+Regina/11006902/story.html>

Aboriginal Politics

Cuthand: Neglect of First Nations evident in federal budget

By Doug Cuthand, The Starphoenix April 24, 2015



Doug Cuthand

The federal budget was everything I imagined, and less. I didn't expect much from this government but its latest budget was a disgusting mix of revenge and political neglect.

It was obvious well in advance that the budget would be aimed at the re-election of Stephen Harper's Conservative government, which took precedence over everything. It's an unfortunate fact that First Nations people don't vote in large numbers, and it will be even harder for our people to vote in this election. Why bother wasting money where there is little or no political payback, seems to have been the government's thinking.

The government last year had committed \$1.9 billion to aboriginal education contingent on passage of its controversial First Nations Education Act. When things went sideways after the chiefs rejected the legislation because of its colonial and paternalistic content, the money was removed. Instead of \$1.9 billion, First Nations education will only receive an additional \$200 million over five years, which amounts to \$40 million a year spread across the country.

This is hardly enough to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population.

The \$1.9 billion included \$500 million for building and renovating reserve schools, and the rest was to be a top-up for education funds. The \$500 million capital fund remains in place, but about \$1 billion has been clawed back. The money is now included in funding used to balance the budget.

Such an "Our way or the highway" consultation process amounts to political extortion. The First Nations Education Act was the only piece of major legislation the Harper government was unable to ram through Parliament, and that sticks in its craw.

In fact, the Harper government has failed to address any of the serious funding shortfalls that exist in Indian Country. For example, federal on-reserve First Nations education grants amount to \$6,500 per student compared to \$10,500 for students in the provincial

system. Capital costs have soared as aboriginal student populations are growing, and property is deteriorating because of lack of funds for renovations and new construction.

While the federal government delivers a parsimonious budget for Aboriginal Affairs, it isn't done there. Last year, about \$30 million of education capital lapsed and was returned to the federal treasury. Formerly if a capital budget was about to lapse funds, Indian Affairs staff would do a quick search and provide funds to schools that needed renovations. The funds could be disbursed and repairs made. Staff members are now afraid to stick out their necks and spend money.

The department's budget increases have been capped at two per cent per year since 1997 despite the fact that cost increases due to inflation and population growth exceed that every year. In 2005, Paul Martin's Liberal government, the provinces and First Nations negotiated the Kelowna accord to address this shortfall. The Harper government scrapped the accord, and we continued to fall behind.

The Federal Human Rights Tribunal will provide its ruling in May or June on the shortfall in child welfare funding that has been doggedly pursued by Cindy Blackstock and the First Nations Child and Caring Society. The society has maintained that there is a discrepancy of 22 per cent between provincial rates and Aboriginal Affairs rates for child welfare.

If the tribunal rules in favour of the caring society, Ottawa will be forced to step up and increase its rates to provincial parity. Once this begins we can expect demands for parity in areas such as education, social services and First Nations administration.

A recent StarPhoenix story dealt with the sad case of Louisa Moberly from the Montreal Lake Cree Nation, who was transported from La Ronge to Saskatoon for treatment. Later, she was returned to Prince Albert to recover. The federal government covered the cost of only part of the transfer. Had she not been a First Nations person, the province would have picked up the whole bill.

This is just one sad example of the federal government's failure to provide services that are fair and based on parity with provincial services. Health care for First Nations people is a treaty right that must be honoured.

Ottawa has the constitutional and treaty responsibility for First Nations. Funding and program delivery should include all those services that the federal, provincial and municipal governments provide. The responsibility of a chief and council extends to that of the health board, school board and provincial services. All the funding must come from the federal government.

The items in this week's federal budget, such as income splitting and \$10,000 tax free savings accounts, will have a negligible effect on our people. The shortfall must be addressed, but this government has simply ignored it at the expense of First Nations people.

This issue can't be just kicked down the road in the hopes of balancing the budget.

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/life/Neglect+First+Nations+evident+federal+budget/10999983/story.html>

New group gives political voice to Vancouver's urban aboriginals

By Wawmeesh G. Hamilton Metro, April 27, 2015



Ernie Crey, president of the newly formed Northwest Indigenous Council, at the Oppenheimer Park protest camp last summer.

A new advocacy organization intends to give Vancouver's aboriginal residents some political oomph.

The constitution and other documents giving life to the Northwest Indigenous Council were mailed to B.C. Registry Services on Tuesday.

According to its constitution, the organization will be a political voice for B.C.'s off reserve aboriginals with municipal, provincial and federal governments.

It will also advocate for a host of issues including homelessness, addictions, violence against women and a disproportionate number of children in foster care.

"This is completely unacceptable," said Ernie Crey, who is the society's president. "There is a need for a strong, clear voice that can advocate politically and influence government policies because that's not being done right now."

Vancouver is home to 40,000 aboriginal people, according to the 2011 Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study. The city has the country's third largest aboriginal population behind Winnipeg and Calgary. Half the population is under age 24 and is growing at four times the national rate.

The 2011 National Household Survey notes that more than 196,000 aboriginal people live in B.C. Of them, more than half live off reserve and in cities.

The new organization will be self sustaining and won't initially apply for government core funding, Crey said.

"We strongly believe in independence and self reliance," Crey said. "Government funding attracts Latte La-De-Da Nation types and not serious advocates."

The City of Vancouver's Urban Aboriginal People's Advisory Committee advises the city on urban aboriginal civic engagement, but this falls short of the mark, Crey said. "These agencies advocate for better funding and services but they have no political voice in the mainstream," he said.

Aboriginal people living in Oppenheimer Park could have benefitted from such advocacy last year, Crey said. A tent city was erected in Oppenheimer last June to protest of the city's failure to end homelessness or provide adequate housing for low-income residents. More than half of the campers were aboriginal, Crey said.

The United Native Nations Society, which Crey was president of in 1992, used to perform such advocacy. But the organization is now defunct, dissolving in 2013 after failing to file documentation.

Vancouver is home to the offices of the First Nations Summit, Union of BC Indian Chiefs and Assembly of First Nations BC regional chief. But those organizations are struggling with on-reserve issues.

"What is really missing and is sorely needed is political advocacy for off reserve people, Crey said.

Direct Link: <http://metronews.ca/news/vancouver/1352716/new-group-gives-political-voice-to-vancouver-urban-aboriginals/>

Canada's war of words at UN Indigenous forum

By [Dene Moore](#) / [Daily Brew](#) – 23 hours ago



AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde speaks at a news conference in Ottawa on Friday, Feb. 27, 2015 following the ...

Aboriginal leaders have taken the government of Canada to task at a United Nations conference on Indigenous peoples.

[Assembly of First Nations Chief Perry Bellegarde told delegates](#) at the close of the meeting in New York this week that the federal government's words to the world differ from its actions on the homefront.

"It is frankly disturbing that the government of Canada claims that Indigenous rights and Indigenous peoples are a priority at international forums and in front of the international community yet their actions at home are serving to undermine Indigenous rights and peoples," Bellegarde said after delivering his closing remarks to the [Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues](#).

For its part, the federal government laid out its progress and priorities for First Nations, including steps to address suicide and mental health and economic development.

Françoise Ducros, senior assistant deputy minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, told delegates last week that Ottawa has "[removed obstacles to concluding treaties](#)." She did not mention that, according to several reports, one of the main obstacles has been the government of Canada.

Canada has also taken steps to ensure First Nations have access to safe, clean drinking water by passing the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act. Officials are now working with First Nations to develop regulations for reserves, she said.

Ducros also told conference delegates that the federal government recognizes the serious [issue of violence against Indigenous women](#), a high-profile issue that has drawn attention not just at home but abroad and before the UN.

"As you are aware, there has been considerable discussion within a number of countries, including Canada, regarding the issue of violence against Indigenous women," Ducros said in her statement to the forum.

"The government of Canada recognizes that [addressing violence against Indigenous women](#) is a shared responsibility across all levels of government, including at the community level. That is why we are working with all levels of Canadian government, police, the justice system, and with Indigenous communities and organizations to take action and address this important issue."

She highlighted a \$200-million action plan announced last fall but did not mention the war of words between the Conservative government and many First Nations leaders over a public inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

But at the heart of the dispute before the international forum is a private member's bill enshrining the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as law.

Ducros told delegates that Canada endorsed the declaration 4 ½ years ago and “remains committed to building a positive relationship.”

However, the government has said that the legislation could amount to a veto for First Nations over any development or legislation with which they disagree.

Bellegarde said that's not so.

“The UN Declaration provides for an approach based on reconciliation, healing, justice and peace,” [he told the UN forum](#). “Giving life to its principles will help close the gap in the quality of life between First Nations and Canadians and bring honour to Canada.”

He asked delegates to “highlight the unprincipled positions and actions of those States, such as Canada, that undermine Indigenous peoples' human rights and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.”

The forum wraps up on May 1.

Direct Link: <https://ca.news.yahoo.com/blogs/dailybrew/canadas-war-of-words-at-un-indigenous-forum-165214398.html>

Aboriginal Sports

First Nations enjoy hockey success

[Paul MacDougall](#) Published on April 24, 2015





Top: Victor Christmas, Raymond Christmas, Ron Paul, Pat Christmas, Richard Mathews, Roderick Johnston and Frank Doucette
 Bottom: Donald Marshall, Dave Moore, Lawrence Paul, Simon Marshall

Mind, body, spirit, intellect, on and off the ice

On April 9, goaltender Carey Price won his 43rd game surpassing the Montreal Canadiens' single season record jointly held by Ken Dryden and Jacques Plante. Price is First Nations on his mother's side. Lynda Price, former chief of Ulkatcho First Nation in British Columbia, family history can be traced back to the Nuxalk and Carrier peoples.

Prior to the 2014 Olympics in which Price logged shutouts in the semi-final and gold medal games, Lynda Price said her son and her family's connection to the land "and where we come from helps keep us grounded in who we are. Our culture has been to maintain the simple life and appreciate the blessings our creator has given us." She feels this is reflected in her son's play on the ice.

Closer to home Eskasoni Elder Albert Marshall says that through sports first nation peoples often display a renewal of spirit to the land. He sees sport as a way to interconnect mind, body, spirit and intellect. If these facets of a person are working together than one can excel at sports, like hockey. Those that are good at their sport are empowered and have a better chance to live their dream, whatever it may be. In Lynda Price's words, "Carey is running down a dream that he has had since he was a child."

The connection of local Mi'kmaq people to hockey goes back right to the very early days. They probably invented the game and are responsible for many of the early hockey sticks, now valuable collectables.

As a young boy from Membertou, Frank Doucette remembers hard work all week long in winter collecting firewood, then getting rewarded with hockey on Sundays. After mass in the morning and lunch the kids would, "go play hockey at the reservoir until it was almost dark; then you'd walk home to have supper... and then back to the reservoir for some leisure skating until almost midnight."

Various Mi'kmaq communities had their own teams and often played against each other in leagues and tournaments. Eskasoni had the Red Devils and MicMacs while the Membertou Blue Devils represented their community. In the accompanying photo from the 1950s are faces that many will remember; including Frank Doucette in the top right and Donald Marshall Senior in the lower left. Marshall went on to serve as Grand Chief of the Mi'kmaq for 27 years until his death in 1991. He was also involved in the Mi'kmaq hockey association for years.

Stephen Augustine, Dean of Unama'ki College at CBU states that many times the captain of a community's hockey team would eventually become chief and often those on the team became council members. From his hometown of Elsipogtog (Big Cove), New Brunswick, chiefs Anthony Francis and Albert Levi were avid hockey players. One of the most well-known First Nation hockey players at the national level came from Elsipogtog. Everett Sanipass was drafted 14th in the 1986 draft and played left wing with the Chicago Black Hawks and the Quebec Nordiques.

Sanipass was part of the world junior team involved in the legendary bench clearing brawl between Canada and the Soviets in 1987. Sergei Shesterikov collided with Sanipass in the second period leading to a fight between the two, quickly followed by many others. The inexperienced Norwegian referee lost control of the game, left the ice and the officials turned the arena lights out in a poor effort to stop the fighting.

Ironically the brawl shed new light on the then poorly attended junior hockey tournament which today is regarded as one of the top events in the international hockey year. Nineteen of the 20 players, including Sanipass would go on to NHL careers. A number of the Soviets, including Alexander Mogilny, broke into the NHL when the iron curtain fell in 1991; five won Stanley Cups.

Since 1918 it is believed 66 Aboriginal players have played in the NHL, five like Price were goaltenders. Jordin Tootoo from Nunavut, was the first Inuit to be drafted by an NHL team in 2001. He plays with New Jersey. Metis, Rene Bourque plays with the Columbus Blue Jackets. He won the hardest shot competition in 2005 at 99.8 mph.

Paul MacDougall, a diehard Leafs fan considers himself one of the "faithful remnant," as his local clergyman reminded him every Sunday since the January slide. He is also an educator and writer and lives in Sydney. His column appears monthly in the Cape Breton Post.

Direct Link: <http://www.capebretonpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/2015-04-24/article-4124246/First-Nations-enjoy-hockey-success/1>

Energy, the Environment & Natural Resources

Greenland, Nunavut reinforce necessity of seal trade for Inuit

"There is no better example of sustainable resource"

NUNATSIAQ NEWS, April 24, 2015 - 1:00 pm



Aju Peter sings a song to a little girl during a Celebration of the Seal event in Iqaluit in 2014. (PHOTO BY DAVID MURPHY)

With Arctic watchers looking toward Iqaluit and the Arctic Council ministerial today, the governments of Greenland and Nunavut are taking the opportunity to raise the ongoing contentious issue of seal harvesting and selling seal pelts in Europe.

A joint statement from the two governments, released Apr. 24, reinforced their view that the seal harvest in Nunavut and Greenland is sustainable and important to local Inuit economies.

“The Inuit seal hunt has taken place for thousands of years,” said Premier Peter Taptuna, in the statement. “There is no better example of sustainable resource.”

The European Union is revising its regulation banning seal product imports, including the exemption for seal products harvested by indigenous people, in response to [a World Trade Organization ruling in May 2014](#) that found that in its current form, the regulation discriminates against Canada and Norway in favour of EU member states.

The purpose of the joint Nunavut-Greenland statement is to ensure that the revision of the regulation does not end up being tighter and more restrictive than it is already.

Greenland’s minister of Industry, Labour, Trade and Foreign Affairs, Vittus Qujaukitsoq — who is in Iqaluit for the April 24 Arctic Council ministerial meeting — backed up his Nunavut colleague.

“I am grateful that Greenland and Nunavut stand together on this important issue, which affects us greatly, and together state that there is absolutely no reason for a tightening or further prohibitions in the EU Seal Ban Regulation,” said Qujaukitsoq.

The joint statement shows support for recent high-level negotiations between Canada and the European Union to get Canadian Inuit seal products into the market in France and Germany.

When it comes to selling seal coats and mittens across the Atlantic Ocean, you have to first make your way through a complicated political labyrinth.

The European Parliament voted in 2009 to ban the importation of seal products within EU member states, a ban which included a vaguely-defined exemption for seal products harvested by indigenous hunters.

Since then, Canada, Norway and a variety of businesses and Inuit organizations have tried and failed to overturn the ban in the European Court.

In October 2014, Canada announced that [they’d struck a deal with the EU](#) to ensure seal products made from animals harvested by indigenous peoples in Canada could be legally sold within EU member states.

This past March, the European Union Commission [proposed a new regulation](#) at World Trade Organization meetings in Geneva to develop an actual system that would ensure Canadian Inuit have access to the EU market.

And Ottawa seems keen to help shore up that system.

Federal Finance Minister Joe Oliver's budget, released this week, includes [\\$5.7 million in new funding](#) over five years aimed, in part, at developing a certification system for Inuit seal products to give them legal authenticity and streamline their sale.

"The seal harvest is important to the economic well-being and the socio-cultural fabric of Nunavut's coastal communities, where economic opportunities are limited," said Taptuna, in the statement.

"The joint statement recognizes that we want the Indigenous Communities Exemption to work to benefit Inuit communities."

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674greenland_nunavut_reinforce_necessity_of_seal_trade_for_inuit/

Sealing advocates applaud idea of federal funding, but not approach

Magdalen Islands seal hunting advocate calls funding announcement 'weird'

By Elyse Skura, [CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 24, 2015 5:53 AM CT Last Updated: Apr 24, 2015 7:18 AM CT



A worker at Always In Vogue in St. John's makes a pair of seal skin mittens to sell at the store. Gil Theriault, with the Magdalen Islands Seal Hunters Association, says products like seal skin boots 'fly off the shelves' in the Magdalen Islands, Que. (CBC)

Sealing advocates from across Canada are excited the federal government is putting money into the industry, but some say the new fund's focus on marketing is the wrong approach.

This week's federal budget included the \$5.7-million fund, which rolls out over five years and is specifically targeted at ensuring Inuit can make use of [an exemption to the European Union's seal ban](#).

"Clearly it seems like European people have decided that seal hunting was immoral," says Gil Theriault with the Magdalen Islands Seal Hunters Association.

"I'm not sure that we should insist on trying to sell them those products, especially when we know that there is market right here at home."

Theriault calls the funding announcement "weird."

In the Magdalen Islands, Que., Theriault says sealskin boots fly off the shelves and a local butcher finds it hard to keep up with the growing demand for seal meat.

If it were up to him, the fund would focus on making sure sealers can harvest enough fur for a viable industry and ensuring the quality of products is high.

"We should all definitely work together to address those real problems, real challenges and real opportunities."

Funding sends 'huge' message

Bernie Halloran says, regardless of how this money will be spent, including funding for the industry in the budget sends a "huge" message.



Bernie Halloran, owner of Always in Vogue, says the fact that the government is providing funding for the sealing industry is 'huge,' regardless of how it is spent. (CBC)

"The country should be behind us," says Halloran, who owns Always in Vogue, a high-end seal skin fashion store in St. John's. "Canada should be behind the seal industry."

While the five-year investment seems to focus on the traditional hunt, Halloran says any support will help strengthen sealing industry overall.

"The Inuit obviously are the forefathers of the seal industry."

Both Theriault and Halloran say the Inuit concept of using the entire seal, including fur, meat and oil, is key to the future of the industry.

"We're working very closely with [the North]," says Theriault, who regularly works with sealers in both Nunavut and Newfoundland and Labrador.

And when it comes to expanding markets, both sealing advocates see Asia as potentially fertile ground.

"To me the tides are turning," says Halloran, who recently got into the [seal processing business](#).

"I think it's a great time to be in the business."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/sealing-advocates-applaud-idea-of-federal-funding-but-not-approach-1.3046491>

Meet Judith Sayers, a First Nations Renewable Energy Trailblazer

Posted: 04/24/2015 5:08 pm EDT Updated: 04/24/2015 5:59 pm EDT



Judith Sayers is a former chief, a negotiator and a pioneer in helping First Nations get involved in the renewable energy business.

Her traditional name is Kekinusuqs (pronounced ke-kay-ana-suks) and she is a member of the Hupacasath (pronounced who-pa-cha-sut) First Nation in the Greater Alberni Valley on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

Trained as a lawyer in Alberta she eventually made her way back to the Hupacasth First Nation where she served as chief for 14 years, as well as chief negotiator. In the '90s plans for a large natural gas facility in Port Alberni were turned away due to concern about emissions. "As a nation, we asked ourselves, 'Well, how can we be a part of the solution so that we aren't creating greenhouse gas emissions,'" says Sayers.

After evaluating several forms of renewable energy and the natural resources in their territory, run-of-river hydro made the most sense. They evaluated 10 sites on rivers, creeks and streams in their traditional territory and settled on China Creek. Run-of-river is a relatively simple piece of technology. You divert a part of creek that has a big elevation change into a pipe. You run that pipe downhill to a powerhouse where you spin a turbine with the force of the water and generate electricity.

The Hupucasath First Nation with Sayers as their chief built a 6.5-megawatt run-of-river hydro project that produces more than enough electricity for the 6,000 homes in Port Alberni. They created the Upnit Power Corporation and retained a 72.5 per cent controlling interest and worked with partners Synex Energy Resources Ltd. (12.5 per cent), Ucluelet First Nation (10 per cent) and Port Alberni (5 per cent).

"We believe in the right of self-determination," says Sayers. "We own 72.5 per cent of this project. We get to set the standards. And through setting the standards of how we operate, we also manage our territory, the land, the water, and that was one of the great benefits of doing this. And so we get to make the decisions."

They got to choose where to put the project, a key part in mitigating environmental damage. Due to impassable falls there was no salmon run in China Creek and care was taken to improve the health and numbers of the local Dolly Varden trout population. They also ensured there were no sacred sites and the project produced two full time jobs.

The Hupacasath gave the town of Port Alberni a five per cent stake in the business, which deepened their relationship with the town.

"That was just the start of lots of things and we're doing lots of new ventures now with the First Nations in this area. We have ten First Nations on the West Coast of Vancouver Island, Port Alberni's is their headquarters for most of the First Nations, and there's lots of joint ventures going out, so that was the first," says Ken McRae, the former mayor of Port Alberni.

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery and today 125 of the 203 First Nations in BC are involved in renewable energy projects. Not all involve ownership and numerous renewable energy technologies are being deployed including solar, wind and biomass. "Some First Nations are building their second and third projects," says Sayers.

Now not all run of river projects are amazing. Some can have real, negative environmental impacts particularly on fish populations. But by having First Nations and other local groups own these projects it creates pressure to build good projects and avoid unnecessary environmental impacts.

The China Creek project is ten years old and Sayers has moved on from being chief to joining the board of Clean Energy BC as well as teaching and consulting.

Ten years down the road current Chief Steve Tatoosh says: "It's a great success story for the Hupacasath. I mean, there's a lot of risks involved in these types of projects but with good financial management and due diligence, I think we'll overcome that."

Some years are better than others, but the \$14 million project is about halfway paid off and they've had more good years than bad-about seven out of ten have been good according to Tatoosh.

"Year to year, you can make up towards a million dollars and with good financial management, we've been able to put money on the debt every year," says Tatoosh.

But it's not a sure thing, run of river is weather dependent you need a good snowpack and lots of rain to make money. When we spoke to Sayers at the edge of China Creek it was pouring down.

"It's a good day when our members complain about rain I always say: 'Well, we're making money,'" says Sayers with a laugh.

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/david-dodge/judith-sayers-energy_b_7101892.html

B.C., First Nations reach coastal marine pact to protect ocean health

By Larry Pynn, Vancouver Sun April 27, 2015



An agreement on sustainable marine planning covering about 102,000 square kilometres of the B.C. coast — much of it fronting the Great Bear Rainforest — was jointly announced Monday in Victoria by the provincial government and 18 first nations. Snowcapped mountains are reflected in the waters of Kitimat, Tuesday, June, 17, 2014.

A marine planning agreement between the province and 18 First Nations covering two-thirds of the B.C. coast — including the Great Bear Rainforest — was hailed Monday as an important first step in sustainable management of the oceans.

The agreement covers about 102,000 square kilometres of coastal lands, split into four sub-regions — Haida Gwaii, North Coast, Central Coast, and North Vancouver Island. Within each region, areas are identified by use, such as general use or special protection. Natural and cultural areas are also identified.

But aboriginal leaders said coastal planning won't be complete until similar agreements are reached with the federal government, which has jurisdiction in key areas to do with the water itself such as commercial fishing and shipping, including transport of oil and liquefied natural gas.

Art Sterritt, executive director of Coastal First Nations, said in an interview it's disappointing Ottawa did not participate in the Marine Planning Partnership agreement. But, he said, talks are underway with federal officials and he is "fairly optimistic the federal government is going to engage with us."

Those talks are complicated by the range of federal departments involved, including transport, environment, aboriginal affairs and fisheries, he said.

Sterritt said Ottawa agreed to a "high-level plan ... not much teeth in it" under a separate program — Pacific North Coast Integrated Management Area — but backed out of detailed talks for marine plans because of concerns from the shipping industry and Enbridge.

Sophie Doucet, a spokeswoman for the fisheries and oceans minister, said Ottawa did not participate in the Marine Planning Partnership because of other similar land use work, including development of a network of marine protected areas on the B.C. coast.

"Our national conservation plan includes \$37 million for measures to strengthen marine and coastal conservation across Canada," she added.

The Marine Planning Partnership plans incorporate factors such as species, habitats, and marine uses, including recreational and commercial activities, from tourism to aquaculture, and are meant to serve as a basis for future management decisions, especially in the near shore and foreshore areas of the coast. The plans do not address management of uses and activities in areas of federal jurisdiction, or management of private lands or uplands.

Three zones are recognized: general management, in which a wide range of sustainable marine uses are permitted; special management, areas best suited for specific activities such as tourism or aquaculture; and protection management, primarily for conservation purposes.

Sabine Jessen, national oceans program director of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, said the marine plans mark the "beginning of a long process" towards implementation, adding she hopes the "federal government will seize the opportunity to

build on this” and ensure that the region receives comprehensive ocean management and protection.

Tides Canada and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation contributed to the effort.

Steve Thomson, B.C.’s minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, said the “impressive” agreement was achieved through compromise by all parties and that hard work lies ahead to implement the plans. “We’re not at the end of the journey.”

For more information, visit: mappocean.org.

Direct Link:

<http://www.vancouversun.com/First+Nations+reach+coastal+marine+pact+protect+ocean+health/11008289/story.html>

Nicola Valley: First Nations leader predicts arrests in protests against sewage spreading

CP April 29, 2015



Friends of the Nicola Valley are worried that the area’s growing compost industry, using what they say is human ‘sewage sludge,’ will have repercussions on residents’ health, the environment and their drinking water.

MERRITT — A First Nations leader says he expects arrests as a protest continues against the spreading of sewage-treatment waste in the Nicola Valley.

Lower Nicola Indian Band Chief Aaron Sam said a biosolids company has indicated it will send a truck through its composting site west of Merritt despite a blockade by First Nations members.

Sam was part of a group of chiefs who occupied Premier Christy Clark’s West Kelowna office earlier this month to protest the shipment of waste from the Fraser and Okanagan valleys and its distribution on farms and ranches and in forests.

The sit-in was ended when the province promised a high-level meeting, but the chiefs were not satisfied with the result and announced they were banning the practice.

Sam said BioCentral's truck will likely be carrying equipment, and many community members are OK with the truck going through since it will not contain actual biosolids.

But he said other community members are adamant that the truck will not get through and said he expects arrests, depending on how Mounties react.

Direct Link:

<http://www.theprovince.com/news/Nicola+Valley+First+Nations+leader+predicts+arrests+protests+against+sewage+spreading/11014257/story.html>

Land Claims & Treaty Rights

Gov't emails reveal concerns over First Nation consultation on Enbridge Northern Gateway

Environment Canada worried that Enbridge's Northern Gateway process allowed "limited or no opportunity for responsible authorities to engage with Aboriginal groups."

[Carlos Tello](#)

Apr 23rd, 2015



A damning email obtained by a northern B.C. First Nation shows the federal government's own staff had serious concerns about the crown's consultation process with First Nations.

“First Nations were not involved in the design of the consultation process,” an Environment Canada representative wrote in 2009.

It was just one of several concerns raised by Environment Canada staff when asked to comment on First Nation consultation for Enbridge's Northern Gateway Pipeline Project, according to internal government emails.

In the email obtained by the Haisla First Nation through an Access of Information request, government staff said they “remained concerned with the proposed approach to consultation” and that the government's approach provides “limited or no opportunity for responsible authorities to engage with Aboriginal groups” until after the Joint Review Panel's report is completed.

The list of concerns ends by saying that “while the approach identifies an opportunity to consult on the recommendations, it is not clear that it would meet the honour of the Crown duty.”

Canada's own administration thought consultation process was flawed: Ross

For Haisla Nation Chief Councillor Ellis Ross, Environment Canada’s emails validate their claim that the Harper government's consultation process was deeply flawed.

“[The email] confirmed what we've been saying since 2009, that the processes put in place did not adequately address our rights and title interests,” he told the *Vancouver Observer*.

Ross said he hopes that these emails will not only help them win in their court case against Canada, but also prove they were right to denounce the consultation process around Northern Gateway.

“I hope that people realize that what we've been saying since 2009 regarding title and consultation, we were correct all along,” he said. “We are not the only ones who think that way. Canada's own administration thought this as well.”

The Northern Gateway Pipeline Project proposes the construction of two pipelines that would run 1,178 kilometres from Bruderheim, Alberta to Kitimat, British Columbia, through the traditional territories of some northern B.C. First Nations. The estimated cost of the project is \$7.9 billion.

The Haisla, along with seven other First Nations, are challenging the Government of Canada's decision to approve the project through judicial reviews filed in the Federal Court of Appeal, on the basis of inadequate consultation.

FOI emails released came four years after request

Environment Canada's email, dated September 1, 2009, was released nearly four years after the access to information request was first filed by the Nation.

Another email, this one by Transport Canada, was also obtained by the Haisla Nation through the Access of Information Act. Dated August 31, 2009, the message identifies more concerns regarding the consultation process.

"The consultation plan as written does not appear to be flexible enough to account for changing circumstances and incoming information," it states.

Both emails were sent to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency in response to a request for comments on the approach to Crown consultation.

Ross laments that the federal government's long delay in releasing the emails has probably made the documents inadmissible in court, as the court case is well on its way already. Nevertheless, he said the Haisla will still push for them to be admitted.

Natural Resources Canada declined to comment on the contents of the emails.

Direct Link: <http://www.vancouverobserver.com/news/govt-emails-reveal-concerns-over-first-nation-consultation-enbridge-northern-gateway>

Russian oilpatch ignores rights, environment: aboriginal leader

The Canadian Press
April 25, 2015 09:46 AM



An oil spill outside Usinsk, Komi Republic, Russia is shown in this undated handout photo. Russian aboriginal people from the area affected by the spill are in Canada at an international meeting of Arctic states to raise attention to the environmental costs of that country's oilpatch. THE CANADIAN PRESS/HO - Greenpeace International, Denis Sinyakov

IQALUIT, Nunavut - When you live in the middle of the Russian oilpatch, even the fish smell, says an aboriginal leader from that country.

"The fish are smelling like oil and the water in the rivers, it's undrinkable," said Nikolay Rochev, the head of Izvatas, a group that represents the Izhma Komi people who herd reindeer in the forests, wetlands and tundra of a France-sized area in central Russia.

Rochev was in Canada for a meeting of the Arctic Council, the group of eight nations that ring the North Pole that offers the main international forum for regional cooperation. His group belongs to the federation of Russian aboriginals that is one of the council's permanent participants.

On Friday, Russian Environment Minister Sergei Donskoi told the council that his country is determined to develop its Arctic resources according to the highest international standards.

"We are certain that this should happen, but only happen with great care and stewardship for the environment and with the necessary respect for the people who live there."

Asked if he believed that, Rochev's response required no translation: "Nyet."

Russia has no public oil spill inventory. But Greenpeace — which brought Rochev to Canada — used satellite data to count up at least 1,000 spills over the last two years in the Komi region alone. Greenpeace estimates the volume of all Russian spills at six million tonnes per year — six times the volume of the Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

Hundreds of kilometres of seismic lines and uncounted wellsites and other infrastructure cut up the landscape. Drilling occurs as close as 100 metres from homes, said Rochev.

Toxic water from the wells is often simply pumped out on the ground. Last year, 150 reindeer died at a single site within minutes after drinking from one such pool.

Abandoned wells are left in muddy, tracked-up disarray for years. Pipelines block reindeer migration routes.

Meanwhile, promises of jobs, schools and other benefits from Russian companies such as Lukoil, Gazprom and Rosneft have failed to materialize. Companies make annual payments to communities that amount to a few dollars per capita.

Public hearings, oversight, transparency? Nyet.

"We are fed up with the situation when oil companies ignore us," Rochev said. "There is no legal leverage to change the system."

In a recent survey, Izvatas found that 70 per cent of the local people were somewhat or heavily dependent on the land for hunting and gathering. As well, the Komi still raise 80,000 reindeer.

But the increasingly tainted land doesn't just hurt the Komi in the pocketbook or larder, said Rochev. In his language, the word for "forest" and "home" are the same.

"It's for spiritual surviving," he said. "It's about keeping their traditional land use."

One municipality is so angry it passed a resolution banning Lukoil from its area even though it has no legal right to do so, said Rochev.

"Politically, it's a very strong signal in Russia, where such steps are impossible to imagine."

But Rochev knows his main weapon is public awareness and publicity.

He's also trying to bring Arctic aboriginals together to speak with one voice on energy development on their lands.

"We have to unite indigenous people from different Arctic states," he said. "The earth is quite small."

- See more at: <http://www.timescolonist.com/russian-oilpatch-ignores-rights-environment-aboriginal-leader-1.1865168#sthash.i8YJahEv.dpuf>

Clyde River Inuit take offshore oil and gas plan to court

Baffin Island communities say seismic testing proposal threatens marine mammals they still rely on as a source of food and economic subsistence

by [Warren Bernauer](#), [Ava Lightbody](#)

April 26, 2015, 10:38 AM

On April 20, the Inuit of Clyde River, Nunavut were in a Toronto courtroom seeking to overturn a plan approved by the National Energy Board (NEB) to search for petroleum offshore near their Baffin Island community. Several dozen demonstrators rallied outside, signing a banner in support of the community and sampling raw beluga whale. The court has reserved judgement.

The proposal to conduct seismic surveys was submitted to the NEB in 2011 by a consortium of companies: TGS-NOPEC, Petroleum Geophysical Services, and MultiKlient Invest. The plan was approved in the summer of 2014. By that time, opposition to the project – and indignation that Inuit concerns about lack of consultation and possible effects on wildlife did not appear to have been taken seriously – had spread across Baffin Island.

Clyde River mayor Jerry Natanine says the seismic surveys, which overlap important whale habitat and fishing grounds, pose an unnecessary risk to commercial fishing activities and the wildlife Inuit depend upon for subsistence hunting.

Many Inuit on Baffin Island still rely on marine mammals, including seals and whales, as a source of food. The sale of seal skins and narwhal ivory provides important income to hunters, while the commercial fishery provides seasonal employment. Hunting and fishing are also an integral part of the culture and identity of many Inuit.

“The detrimental effects that seismic testing can have have not been properly researched,” says Natanine. At community consultations Natanine says the companies pushing the proposal “couldn’t even answer our most basic questions. How can we expect them to communicate with us and work with our community if they can’t even talk to us openly about their plans and the possible impacts?”

Offshore seismic testing involves the use of air guns to emit bursts of sound underwater, loud enough to permeate the ocean floor and return data on the possible locations of oil and gas deposits. In this case, blasts are scheduled to begin this summer and continue every 13 to 15 seconds, 24 hours a day, for five months of the year over the next five years.

Throughout the NEB’s review of the consortium’s proposal, opposition was both clear and widespread. Residents of Nunavut submitted petitions to the NEB and spoke out at public meetings. Clyde River’s local government bodies passed motions opposing the surveys, as did a council of all the mayors from Baffin Island.

Inuit organizations urged the NEB to withhold approval until responsible wildlife protection measures could be designed. The Nunavut Marine Council, an advisory body for resource management in waters adjacent to Nunavut, joined the chorus calling for

further studies. When the NEB approved the project, residents of Clyde River held a local protest.

In August 2014, Clyde River, the local Hunters and Trappers Organization, and mayor Natanine launched a judicial review of the NEB's decision in the Federal Court of Appeals. Clyde River's legal challenge attempts to overturn the NEB decision, and halt seismic work scheduled for this summer.

At the Toronto hearing last week, Nader Hasan, legal counsel for the Clyde River, argued that the Government of Canada did not properly consult with Inuit communities, even though under Canadian law, the Crown is obligated to consult meaningfully with Aboriginal peoples on decisions that may affect their constitutionally-protected Aboriginal and Treaty Rights.

Hasan argued that seismic surveys will impact the Inuit right to hunt marine mammals, which is enshrined in the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, a "modern treaty" between the Crown and the Inuit of Nunavut that was signed in 1993.

Lawyers representing the consortium attempted to have the case dismissed arguing that the community of Clyde River does not have legal standing to bring a challenge based on Aboriginal rights to the courts. According to the consortium's lawyers, only the representative Inuit organizations – the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) or Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) - could do so.

However, in an April 7 media release, QIA president PJ Akeeagok said that his organization supports Clyde River's court challenge.

"QIA continues to be opposed to the proposed seismic survey until Inuit concerns have been met and we support the Hamlet of Clyde River in their efforts to stop the seismic survey," reads the statement.

QIA issued another statement in response to the consortium's argument two days after the Toronto hearing. "QIA wishes to emphatically confirm that it whole-heartedly supports the application made by the Hamlet and HTO. Both before and after the NEB decision, QIA has provided written notice to the proponent, NEB, and the Government of Canada, that in QIA's opinion there has been inadequate consultation with Inuit, whether represented by QIA or by any other organizations."

Natanine tells NOW that people in Clyde River are not opposed to "development" in general in the region. "We have a great need in the Arctic region for infrastructure and jobs," he says.

But according to Natanine, the consultations held by the companies and the NEB were ineffective.

Numerous seismic surveys were carried out off the coast of Baffin Island in the 1970s and 1980s. During the NEB review, Inuit spoke at length about their experience from that period, and the dead and deaf mammals, and disrupted migration patterns left in their wake.

For Natanine, the level of risk is especially high because of the lack of information on marine wildlife habitats in Baffin Bay. "The detrimental effect that seismic testing can have are not even properly researched." He also believes further research on the migration routes of marine mammals through the bay is necessary before responsible oil and gas development is feasible.

Clyde River's court challenge has been accompanied by a growing movement of support. A series of public events were hosted by the Clyde River Solidarity Network – which includes Idle No More, Amnesty International, Greenpeace Canada, and the Mining Injustice Solidarity Network – in advance of the court challenge in Toronto.

The groups have circulated a statement arguing that the approval of seismic surveys without the consent of Inuit amounts to a human rights violation. Signatories include the David Suzuki Foundation, Sierra Club of Canada, Natural Resources Defense Council, the Council of Canadians, OXFAM Canada, KAIROS, as well as, former Deputy Prime Minister of Canada Sheila Copps, journalist Naomi Klein, and actress Lucy Lawless.

Warren Bernauer and Ava Lightbody are members of the Clyde River Solidarity Network.

Direct Link: <https://nowtoronto.com/news/environment/inuit-fight-arctic-petroleum-exploration/>

Feds Charged Ahead With Northern Gateway First Nations Consultation Despite Internal Doubts

Posted: 04/25/2015 6:31 pm EDT Updated: 04/25/2015 6:59 pm EDT



[Internal documents](#) obtained by B.C.'s Haisla Nation show the federal government had concerns about the consultation approach proposed for Enbridge's Northern Gateway pipeline since at least 2009.

[The documents](#), requested by the Haisla Nation nearly four years ago, were released through Access to Information legislation recently and show the federal government was warned it wasn't fulfilling its duty to consult aboriginal peoples as required under Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution.

An Environment Canada email included in the documents contained a list of concerns regarding the consultation process, stating, "it is not clear that [the process] would meet the honour of the Crown duty."

The email also acknowledged "First Nations were not involved in the design of the consultation process" and that there was a "lack of clarity" concerning First Nations' rights and title.

Haisla Nation Chief Coun. Ellis Ross said he received the trove of documents with "mixed emotions."

"We're very satisfied to know the staff of Environment Canada agreed with us in terms of the inadequate process in place to address rights and title," Ross said. "But it's disappointing this information is in our hands now when we can't do anything with it legally or politically."

"But it does confirm what we've been saying all along about the process when it comes to rights and title is very inadequate. It doesn't even follow case law."

Under [Section 35](#) of the Canadian Constitution Act, the government is obligated to "recognize and affirm" First Nations rights, including the right to traditional land and cultural practices. The Crown has a "[duty to consult](#)" First Nations on any projects planned for traditional territory or projects that may affect aboriginal rights.

The [National Energy Board conditionally approved](#) the controversial 1,178 kilometre Northern Gateway pipeline in June 2013 despite broad opposition from First Nations and other British Columbians.

"Now we can see that Canada's own environment ministry agreed with us," Chief Fred Sam of Nak'azdli said.

"For years Nak'azdli and the Yinka Dene Alliance have said to Canada that its approach to consultation for the Enbridge proposal is seriously flawed," he said.

Eight First Nations including the Haisla, the Nak'azdli and Gitxaala Nations have launched a legal challenge against the pipeline on the basis of inadequate consultation.

Chris Tollefson, lawyer with the University of Victoria Environmental Law Centre, said the lack of appropriate consultation was apparent from the moment the Joint Review Panel (JRP) hearings for the Northern Gateway pipeline began.

"At the hearings I could see the frustration of the First Nations that were participating in terms of the inability of the process to deal with their constitutional rights and their issues," Tollefson told DeSmog Canada.

"The JRP in my view was never clear on what its role was in relation to consultation and that uncertainty, I think, will ensure that this issue is before the courts for some time. Because in the end that consultation, from my perspective, was never duly discharged."

When it comes to Section 35 of the Constitution, "the first principle is that First Nations have a right to be consulted on projects that would affect their rights or their title; in short, their livelihood and life and right to occupy traditional territory," he said.

Tollefson said the federal Court of Appeal will hear the case of the eight First Nations as well as two environmental organizations -- [including BC Nature](#) which he represents -- against the Northern Gateway pipeline's approval in Vancouver this October.

An additional Transport Canada email released to the Haisla, dated Aug. 31, 2009, also expressed doubt in the adequacy of the government's approach saying "the consultation plan as written does not appear to be flexible enough to account for changing circumstances and incoming information."

Both the Environment Canada and Transport Canada emails were sent to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, which was seeking input from government agencies on Crown consultation.

Despite these doubts the federal government "charged ahead" with its consultation process, Chief Sam said.

"Now, many First Nations have been forced to go to court to challenge Canada's Enbridge decision," he said.

Gitxaala Nation Chief Clarence Innis said he's "shocked" that, despite the apparent level of uncertainty about consultation, "Canada pressed ahead with this dishonourable treatment of our Nation and other First Nations."

"This confirms the justice of our principled opposition to the shipping of bitumen through our territory and British Columbia's Northwest Coast," Innis said.

For Haisla legal counsel Ellis Ross, the documents cast a shadow on the traditionally fraught relationship between First Nations and the federal government.

"We're trying to follow the rules, and case law principles -- the Haisla isn't blocking roads or anything -- we're trying to follow the courts," he said.

"But with Canada, it's like the rules are there to be bent or broken."

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/carol-linnitt/northern-gateway-first-nations_b_7137702.html

Awaiting justice: Indigenous resistance in the tar sands of Canada

[Melina Laboucan-Massimo](#) 22 April 2015

The Nation of the Lubicon Cree is on the frontlines of environmental destruction, as it challenges the forces behind resource extraction and environmental and cultural genocide, and seeks justice for all.

On April 11, 2015 there were dozens of rallies across Canada demanding true leadership to deal with the climate crisis we face around the world. The federal Harper government continues to be a climate laggard refusing to address the need to reduce our carbon emissions and violate Indigenous peoples rights with its zealous pro-tar sands agenda [URL](#) . For the first time in Quebec, Indigenous peoples led the march to show our resolve to protect the sacredness of Mother Earth and demand justice. As I stood before a crowd of 25 000 people from across Canada, I spoke of the contamination, despair and detrimental impacts my family and many other communities face from resource extraction happening in our homelands of Northern Alberta.



Melina finding oil in water from an oil spill in Lubicon traditional territory. Photo: Joe Whittle. All rights reserved.

Due to being an Indigenous activist who speaks out against environmental destruction I have been labelled by the Canadian government as an “adversary”. Both “Aboriginals”

and “environmentalists” were labelled as such in 2012 when secret government documents were accessed through the Freedom of Information Act. And now the Harper government is taking this to yet another extreme by attempting to pass an anti-terrorism law called Bill C-51 URL which includes targeting the “anti-petroleum movement” as “extremists” because they oppose “critical infrastructure” projects like the tar sands and tar sands pipelines. This bill is an attempt to silence people who do not agree with the Harper government and can be used to target and criminalize democratic peaceful protest movements. Over 100 legal experts expressed deep concern calling the bill “a dangerous piece of legislation” and addressed an [open letter](#) to all members of parliament to amend Bill C-51 or kill it. It is legislation like this that makes it difficult for people to not be scared into silence and for people like me who believe that we need to transition to clean and just work and engage in peaceful protests that may be seen as criminal in the eyes of the Canadian government. But this history is not new for us as Indigenous peoples here in Canada. It is the continuation of neo colonialism seen now in the form of resource extraction, environmental and cultural genocide.

The traditional territory of my ancestors and my Nation of the Lubicon Cree covers approximately 10,000 square kilometres of low-lying trees, forests, rivers, plains, and wetlands – what we call muskeg – in northern Alberta. For three decades, our territory has undergone massive oil and gas development without the consent of the people and without recognition of our treaty & Indigenous rights, which are protected under Section 35 URL of the Canadian Constitution.

In the 1970s, before this encroachment on the land began, my father's generation and my grandparents' generation survived by hunting, fishing, and trapping throughout the region. Back then, and even into my own generation, people were still living off the land. I remember going out on the trapline, and I remember when the water was still good to drink. But as oil and gas have come through the territory, that's changed.

Currently there are more than 2,600 oil and gas wells in our traditional territories. Over 1,400 square kilometres of leases have been granted for tar sands development URL in Lubicon territory, and almost 70 per cent of the remaining land has been leased for future development.

Where there once was self-sufficiency, we are seeing increased dependency on social services as families are no longer able to sustain themselves in what was once a healthy environment with clean air, clean water, medicines, berries, and plants from the Boreal. Our way of life is being replaced by industrial landscapes, polluted and drained watersheds, and contaminated air. And it's very much a crisis situation.

In the North, we are seeing elevated rates of cancers and respiratory illnesses as a consequence of the toxic gases being released into the air and water. And while over \$14 billion in oil and gas revenues have been taken from our traditional territory, our community lives in extreme poverty and still lacks basic medical services and running water.

Unceded territory

Canada's treatment of the Lubicon has been repeatedly condemned by the United Nations, and UN Special Rapporteur Miloon Kothari has called URL for a moratorium on oil and gas in Lubicon territory.

On March 26, 1990, the United Nations Human Rights Committee ruled URL that Canada's failure to recognize and protect Lubicon land rights violated the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights URL. In 2006, the United Nations Human Rights Committee again called URL on Canada to address outstanding land claims in Lubicon territory before granting further licences for economic exploitation, yet this resource extraction is still happening.

In 1899, when Treaty 8 was officially signed in northern Alberta, treaty commissioners overlooked the Lubicon Cree due to their remote and hard-to-reach territory. The Lubicon people therefore never ceded their traditional territory to the Crown. This has led to a precarious and unstable relationship with both the provincial and federal governments as both have continuously undermined the sovereignty of the Lubicon people. For decades the Lubicon have tried to settle these outstanding land disputes, but unfortunately it serves the government's interests to keep the Lubicon land claim outstanding due to the territory's rich oil and gas deposits.

When the construction of an all-weather road began in the early 1970s, the Lubicon people started to contest the encroachment of their traditional territory as multinational corporations began to exploit the land. For the 14 years that followed, the Lubicon attempted to assert their rights through various court proceedings at both the provincial and federal level. By 1988, the Lubicon concluded that it was necessary to use other means of direct action so their voices and message would be heard.

On October 15, 1988, the Lubicon people erected a peaceful blockade, which was successful in stopping oil exploitation of the territory for six days. Only then did Alberta Premier Don Getty meet with the Lubicon chief and agree to a 243-kilometre reserve under the Grimshaw Accord.

Despite this agreement, the Canadian government offered the Lubicon substandard conditions in the land settlement agreement. Even Premier Getty described the offer as "deficient in the area of providing economic stability for the future."

Unfortunately, due to the take-it-or-leave-it approach of the federal government, the land claim negotiations continued from 1989 until 2003 when the talks broke down completely and both parties walked away from the table. To this day, the Lubicon Cree have been unable to settle a land claim, which has drastically hindered their ability to protect themselves and their traditional territory from further exploitation and destruction.

The Rainbow Pipeline rupture

On April 29, 2011, a rupture in the Rainbow Pipeline resulted in a spill of about 4.5 million litres of oil in our territory – one of the biggest oil spills URL in Alberta's history. When the pipeline broke, oil went down the corridor and into the forest, but the majority of it was soaked up into the muskeg, which is like peatland moss and takes thousands of years to be generated. The muskeg is not an isolated system. It's not "stagnant water," as the government claims. It's actually a living, breathing ecosystem that supports life and is connected to all the water in the region.

On the first day of the spill, the school was not notified. When students started to feel sick, they were evacuated from the school under the assumption that it was a propane leak. When they got outside into the field, they realized that the problem was throughout the community.

The first week of the spill, community members experienced physical symptoms: their eyes burned, they had headaches, they felt nauseous. We were told that air quality was not a problem, even though Alberta Environment didn't actually come into the community until six days after the spill. This is problematic since the government granting permits for this type of development to happen, often without the consent of the people, has an obligation to take care of those whom they are directly putting at risk. A lot of people were left wondering what they should do, and if pregnant women and small children should even be in the community.

The Rainbow Pipeline is now 45 years old. When it broke in 2006 and spilled 1 million litres of oil, the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board stated that stress and corrosion in the pipeline's infrastructure contributed to the spill. Five years later, 4.5 million litres spilled in our traditional territory. We're also seeing pipeline breaks like this in other parts of North America, from Kalamazoo, Michigan, to the Kinder-Morgan spill along the West Coast. Will it ever end?



Workers cleaning up the Rainbow pipeline spill in Lubicon territory. Photo: Rogu Collecti / Greenpeace. All rights reserved.

How many more communities have to be put at risk for this type of development, and who is really benefiting? What are we leaving to future generations? We need to shift

away from a fossil fuel-based system and push for renewable energy systems that enable us to be self-sufficient and self-sustaining.

For over a century now, the Lubicon Cree's rights have not been protected or respected. For decades the Lubicon have led local, national, and international lobbying efforts to fight for what is inherently theirs and to protect their right to their land and to clean air and good water. But despite years of raising awareness and increasing exposure, the Lubicon people still wait for justice.



Tar sands impacted community members in a walk of prayer for the land. Photo: Keepers of the Athabasca. All rights reserved.

However, over the past decade of speaking out and demanding justice I have seen a great shift in how our struggles are perceived. Now people from all walks of life are beginning to stand together and seek justice for those first and foremost impacted on the frontlines of environmental destruction. Now more than ever, people are working together as we know that the fate of humanity is wrapped up in our collective fight for a better, more just world for all.

Melina Laboucan-Massimo will be speaking at the [Nobel Women's Initiative](#) conference on the Defence of Women Human Rights Defenders, 24-26 April. 50.50 will be reporting live from the conference. Read more [articles by participants and speakers](#).

Direct Link: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/melina-loubicanmassimo/awaiting-justice-%E2%80%93-indigenous-resistance-to-tar-sand-development-in-cana>

Revealed: Alberta's ploy to break First Nations' pipeline opposition

Premier Jim Prentice angled for Alberta's First Nations to sign a pact that would turn them into pro-pipeline lobbyists in exchange for oil and gas profits



Alberta Premier Jim Prentice on the election campaign trail at an oil well site near Three Hills, Alberta, April 13, 2015. Photograph: TODD KOROL/REUTERS

[Martin Lukacs](#) Wednesday 29 April 2015 14.18 BST Last modified on Wednesday 29 April 2015 14.21 BST

The Alberta government escalated its campaign to build tar sands pipelines under Premier Jim Prentice by seeking to have First Nations become full-blown proponents of the projects in return for oil revenues.

Documents obtained by the Guardian show that under a proposed agreement the province would have funded a task force of Alberta First Nations and government officials to “work jointly on removing bottlenecks and enabling the construction of pipelines to tide-water in the east and west coasts.”

The push was part of a broader diplomatic offensive launched by Progressive Conservative Premier Jim Prentice after he came to power in late 2014, making approval of pipelines his highest priority. Prentice is currently struggling to win re-election.

First Nations have been at the forefront of a growing movement that has delayed the construction of pipelines that would carry Alberta’s controversial tar sands to international markets, raising fears among politicians and investors that the crude will remain landlocked.

The agreement, drafts of which were seen by the Guardian, would have committed Alberta First Nations to conduct regular briefings with TransCanada, Enbridge and Kinder Morgan and to reach out to other First Nations in British Columbia and elsewhere to identify ways of getting their support for pipelines.

In exchange, they would be granted a share of oil royalties and opportunities to become investors or owners of oil enterprises or projects.

Discussions were handled by Joe Dion, an aboriginal oil businessman close to the Progressive Conservative party, who shuttled between Premier Prentice and Alberta's First Nations.

"I've been talking to Jim Prentice about getting an agreement to work with all First Nations to get access to tidewater. I discussed it with him after he got elected. We did drafts, which have been sent to the Premier," he said. "[Prentice] would like to get it going. He needs First Nations support to get access to the west coast, for the Keystone XL pipeline, for the [Energy](#) East pipeline."

The agreement would also have committed Alberta First Nations to "urge others engaged in litigation against Alberta to withdraw their legal challenges."

Several First Nations are legally challenging the Alberta government's management and rapid development of the tar sands, one of the world's most polluting fuel sources.

These include the Athabasca Fort Chipewyan and the Beaver Lake Cree First Nation, who [have a case](#) before the courts alleging wide-scale violations of their aboriginal and treaty rights.

At a conference of right-wing politicians and activists in Ottawa last month, Prentice [told](#) reporters "there are a lot of things going on behind the scenes and I think we are further along than we ever have been" in winning First Nations support.

A draft agreement was first presented to First Nations leaders in the fall of 2014, and in March Alberta's Associate Minister of Aboriginal Relations met with them to finalize the task force that would work on the pact.

Sources say that resistance from one or two Chiefs derailed the agreement at the meeting, but Dion says he's hopeful it can still get signed this summer.

As the price of oil has plummeted, Alberta's reliance on the tar sands has resulted in tens of thousands of job losses and a massive hit to government revenue.

A recent poll [showed](#) that 86 percent of Albertans believe the economy is too dependent on oil and gas, while 71 per cent think that oil companies should pay higher royalties.

Alberta has Canada's greatest potential for renewable solar power, and solar panels could alone cover Alberta's annual electrical energy needs.

Last week the world's leading scientists and economists released a [statement](#) repeating that 75% of known fossil fuel reserves must be left in the ground if humanity is to avoid catastrophic levels of global warming.

Initially slated to easily win office in elections on May 5, Premier Prentice has fallen behind in polls to the opposition New Democratic Party (NDP) and Wildrose Party.

He provoked public anger when his pre-election budget raised fees for government services and froze public sector salaries while rejecting any increase to corporate taxes.

Before becoming Premier, Prentice worked as an envoy for Enbridge trying to win First Nations over to the Northern Gateway pipeline that would cross British Columbia to the Pacific Coast. As Premier, he was serving simultaneously as Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

NDP leader Rachel Notley has said she would reject the Northern Gateway because of “environmental sensitivity,” and end any further lobbying trips to Washington, D.C., for the Keystone XL pipeline. She wants to see more refining and upgrading of crude oil in Alberta instead of its export internationally, and would also support alternative energy.

Notley called Prentice’s decision to delay a climate change strategy until after the elections, after he initially promised it for last December, “profoundly irresponsible.”

The Premier’s office did not return requests for comment.

Direct Link: <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/true-north/2015/apr/29/revealed-albertas-ploy-to-break-first-nations-pipeline-opposition>

Opinion: It’s time to rethink the way we understand First Nations

Goal of many Aboriginal communities is sustainable economic development

By Trevor McLeod and Roger Gibbins, Special to the Sun April 28, 2015



Mike Natomagan, Pinehouse mayor, and Tim Gitzel, Cameco’s president and CEO, sign a historic collaboration agreement.

Potential resource developments too often face an unbridgeable abyss, with project proponents perched on one side and First Nations and environmentalists on the other. Unfortunately, the historic bridge-builders are absent.

Governments have abandoned the space and are assumed to favour project proponents. Regulators, like the National Energy Board, are able to answer “how” a resource might be developed but do not always have the scope to answer the “should” question.

And so, we have a stalemate, which is a win for those opposed to development — and a signal to the business community to take its money elsewhere.

If we rethink our initial assumptions, however, we may realize it is a mistake to place First Nations on either side of the abyss. In fact, they are firmly rooted on both sides.

While many First Nations have very real and culturally embedded environmental concerns, many also have a stake in resource development. Revenue sharing is a meaningless concept if there is no revenue to share. Employment opportunities are important for economically depressed communities.

Unfortunately, years of policy failure have pushed all sorts of historical grievances into negotiations with resource companies. Until these grievances are addressed, some First Nations will oppose resource development on principle. Others are looking to move beyond historic grievances for development solutions that reflect their values.

The idea of thinking of First Nations as partners is not new and certainly not revolutionary, but it deserves more attention and adoption. Fortunately, there are many successful examples of this approach working across Canada.

A joint report released recently by the Assembly of First Nations and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada — *Advancing Positive, Impactful Change* — highlights a number of instances in which strong, meaningful relationships have been built between companies and First Nations. It is worth a read.

The report is both interesting and helpful. Yet, most of the examples highlight the experience of mining and energy companies that produce in the same place for long periods of time, usually decades. These companies for the most part have already figured out the importance of developing partnerships with First Nations.

Saskatchewan’s Cameco Corporation presents just one example. Cameco, one of the largest industrial employers of Aboriginal people in the country, is striking detailed socio-economic agreements (called collaboration agreements) with specific communities. The agreement with the community of Pinehouse includes cash payments (tied to production) to a community trust that ensures all community members benefit.

In 2013, the trust (which is administered by community members and overseen by the Royal Trust Corporation of Canada) provided \$1.8 million to support scholarships, trades training programs, environmental protection activities and the completion of a new arena.

The challenge is more daunting for short term economic opportunities. For example, there is less incentive for shale oil and gas producers with steep production decline rates to spend the time needed to build trust with First Nations. It is also more challenging for companies with linear projects, like pipelines or electricity transmission, that need to build relationships with a number of First Nations. In these cases, all parties need to be realistic about what they expect.

Even after companies and aboriginal communities agree to work together, big obstacles remain. It is still very difficult to match employer needs with employee skills. BHP Billiton and Enbridge have established the Saskatchewan First Nations Natural Resources Centre of Excellence to address these challenges. Employers in the rest of Canada should take a close look at what the Centre of Excellence is doing.

The landscape is shifting in Aboriginal communities. And, if we rethink where First Nations stand, we might be surprised. Many are not on one side or other of the abyss because they have a stake in both sides. They are the bridge, and a badly needed bridge. If a way is to be found out of the growing impasse, the route will lead through First Nations, and through recognition that the goal of many First Nations — sustainable economic development that will deliver tangible benefits to the original inhabitants of the land — is also the optimal strategy for Canada.

Let First Nations play a role in determining whether projects proceed. When they can see real gains for their communities, many will not be hasty in saying no.

Trevor McLeod is the Director of the Centre for Natural Resources Policy at the [Canada West Foundation](http://www.cwf.ca) and Roger Gibbins is a Senior Fellow with the Foundation. www.cwf.ca

Direct Link:

<http://www.leaderpost.com/technology/Opinion+time+rethink+understand+First+Nations/11011938/story.html>

Special Topic: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women

**Breaking one of Canada's best kept
secrets: MMIW**

Activist Audrey Huntley speaks at global human rights conference this weekend

By Audrey Huntley, [for CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 26, 2015 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: Apr 26, 2015 5:00 AM ET



"Never before has the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women commanded public and media attention to the degree that it has in the last few years," says No More Silence co-founder Audrey Huntley. (CBC)

Audrey Huntley will be speaking at the Nobel Women's Initiative conference on the Defence of Women Human Rights Defenders, April 24-26, The Hague.

Canada is not often seen as a place where widespread human rights violations against the indigenous population occur on a regular basis.

Much of the international community's perception of this country is still that of pristine nature and polite inhabitants with health care.

In fact, Canada's indigenous population is over-policed and under-protected, both men and women are incarcerated at rates much higher than the non-indigenous population and face police violence and deaths in custody all too often.

Yet our own mainstream media is finally no longer able to ignore one of this settler colonial country's best-kept secrets: Ongoing genocidal violence against the indigenous population — and more specifically the targeting of indigenous women, girls, transgender and two-spirited people.

Never before has the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women commanded public and media attention to the degree that it has in the last few years.

The demands of community leaders, family members of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, as well as opposition parties to hold a national inquiry is supported by various reports from national and international human rights organizations.

These have cast light on the complicity of Canadian police — and not only their failure to adequately prevent and protect indigenous women and girls from killings, disappearances and extreme forms of violence.

National and international reports raise alarms

In February 2013, Human Rights Watch, a U.S. based human rights group, released its alarming report on the relationship of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and indigenous women and girls in Northern B.C., entitled, *Those Who Take Us Away: Abusive Policing and Failures in Protection of Indigenous Women and Girls in Northern British Columbia, Canada*.

More recently, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) also weighed in, publishing a damning 127-page report in January 2015 that named police failure and systemic discrimination against Canada's indigenous community as contributing to the plight of missing or murdered indigenous women, and that poverty is at the root of the violence.

In 2014, Dr. Maryanne Pearce shared research she had gathered over a seven year period, entitled *An Awkward Silence*. [It included a database that put the number of cases at over 800](#), significantly higher than numbers cited previously.

[Just months later, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police released their own National Operational Review](#) on the issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women. They put the numbers of murdered indigenous women between 1980 and 2012 at 1,017, and cited another 164 as missing under suspicious circumstances.

Activists and community members believe these numbers to be low. They point out that inadequate tracking of ethnicity of victims, and problems with RCMP methodology in identifying indigeneity, indicate that many women would not have been recognized as such.

While indigenous women make up only 4.3 per cent of the total female population, they represent 16 percent of all female homicide victims over more than three decades according to the report.

Deafening silence in mainstream society

It was the deafening quiet in mainstream society around this crisis that prompted the founding of No More Silence in Toronto, Ontario over 10 years ago.

I was approached by Barbara Williams, a white woman ally, and we formed the coalition in 2004.



Two women comfort each other during a women's memorial march in Vancouver. (CBC)

Having lived and worked in Vancouver's downtown eastside in the late 90s when serial killer Robert Pickton was on his rampage, I was inspired by the many grannies and aunties who had been working in the Women's Memorial March organizing committee since 1991.

When Pickton, who had been arrested and released in 1997 — and had then gone on to kill 18 more women — was facing trial on 33 murder charges, the Toronto group also began to hold an annual ceremony every February 14th at police headquarters.

We hold the ceremony in solidarity with the Vancouver march, and to point out that serial killers like Pickton are far from aberrations.

Our first call stated: "We stand in defense of our lives and to demonstrate against the complicity of the state in the ongoing genocide of indigenous women and the impunity of state institutions and actors (police, RCMP, coroners' offices, the courts and an indifferent federal government) that prevents justice for all indigenous peoples."

No More Silence chooses to be at police headquarters in order to highlight the impunity that Canada affords killers of poor and marginalized women — women not deemed worthy of state protection, and indigenous women who are targets of the genocidal policies inherent to a settler state.

We choose to practice ceremony in honouring our missing sisters "both as an act of love for those who are gone and those who remain behind to mourn as well as an assertion of sovereignty."

Canada needs inquiry, families need answers

The Canadian government has consistently refused demands for a public inquiry, which would acknowledge the gravity of the crisis.

An inquiry or commission could at the very least establish a public record, and if led and informed by family members and indigenous women themselves, examine more than the root causes that are already known.

It could go a step further and shed light on why the almost 700 recommendations made on this subject in over 40 reports have not been implemented.

More importantly, however, in my view, is the need of family members for answers in unsolved cases. The under-investigation and police negligence in their duty of care needs to be revealed for what it is, and can only be done so if records are shared.

All of us in No More Silence are well aware that the violence inherent to settler colonialism will only end with decolonization and thus prioritize community capacity and relationship building to this end.

Collaborating with the Native Youth Sexual Health Network and Families of Sisters In Spirit [we have created a community-led database.](#)

It's time for community to build our own structures independent of government and institutional funding. The purpose of the database is to honour our women and provide family members with a way to document their loved ones passing.

This article was initially published on Open Democracy. It was republished with the permission of the author.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/breaking-one-of-canada-s-best-kept-secrets-mmiw-1.3048352>

Adam Jones: Aboriginal men are murdered and missing far more than aboriginal women. A proper inquiry would explore both

[Adam Jones, National Post Staff](#) | April 27, 2015 | Last Updated: Apr 27 6:26 AM ET



The RCMP's refusal to compile data is a shocking abdication of responsibility — perhaps worthy of a Charter challenge.

Canadian society is witnessing a large-scale and highly vocal campaign to draw attention to the fate of missing and murdered aboriginal women. Calls for a full-scale government inquiry reverberate in our politics, mass media, universities and public debate. And the Conservative government has been assailed for dismissing these calls on grounds that most of the murders of aboriginal women are committed by aboriginal men, usually their partners. We know who killed them, say the Conservatives, so we don't need an inquiry. The problem for a longtime leftie like me is that this argument is largely correct, even though Stephen Harper says it is.

Seventy per cent of the perpetrators in Canada's cases of murdered and missing aboriginal women are indigenous, the RCMP commissioner has confirmed.

The suggestion was first made last month by Bernard Valcourt, the aboriginal affairs minister, in a private meeting with First Nations chiefs in Alberta. Aboriginal leaders questioned the veracity of the number because a report last year from the RCMP about those cases did not specify perpetrators' ethnicity.

But in a letter made public Thursday, RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson said data obtained from 300 police agencies "has confirmed that 70 per cent of the offenders were of aboriginal origin."

However, the letter, addressed to Bernice Martial, grand chief of the Treaty No. 6 First Nations, stressed that it is not the ethnicity of offenders that is relevant to investigators, "but rather the relationship between victim and offender that guides our focus with respect to prevention."

According to Statistics Canada data compiled by my research assistant Penny Handley, approximately 2,500 aboriginal people were murdered in Canada between 1982 and 2011, out of 15,000 murders in Canada overall. Of the 2,500 murdered aboriginal Canadians, fully 71 per cent — 1,750 — were male, and 745 were female (and one was "of unknown gender"). A further 105 aboriginal women were listed as "missing for at least 30 days" as of 2013, "in cases where the reason for their disappearance was deemed

‘unknown’ or ‘foul play suspected’,” according to a *Toronto Star* report). Aboriginal men and women are both much more likely to be killed than are other Canadians. And aboriginal women seem overwhelmingly likely to be killed by aboriginal men, notably their partners or spouses. After initially refusing, the RCMP recently confirmed Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt’s claim that 70 per cent of indigenous women’s murderers are indigenous men.

While the RCMP initially declared it would not disclose “statistics on the ethnicity of the perpetrators of solved aboriginal women homicides,” it did acknowledge focusing on the “aboriginal origin of female victims of homicides.” (Curiously, the RCMP presented this as evidence of “the spirit of our bias-free policing policy.”) Its report found that 62 per cent of perpetrators were either spouses (29 per cent), family members (23 per cent) or intimate partners (10 per cent). Thirty per cent were acquaintances and eight per cent were strangers.

Crucially for a prevailing stereotype related to the issue, nearly 90 per cent of murders of aboriginal women were solved, a rate that barely differed from that of non-aboriginal women (88 versus 89 per cent). Once again, statistics for aboriginal men do not appear to have been compiled or circulated. But given that fully “83 per cent of unsolved homicides *overall* are male ... we can assume *the rate for solved murders among Aboriginal males* is significantly lower,” writes a perceptive blogger on these issues, Mr. Mōnijâw. “Of course, since men are murdered far more often, the larger aggregate numbers of homicide victims obscure the picture somewhat.”

Aside from a scattering of sources, however, the silence around these questions has been deafening. The RCMP shirks even compiling the relevant data, let alone circulating and publicizing them. It has no “plans to broaden the National Operational Overview on missing and murdered aboriginal women to include all aboriginal Peoples,” according to Mountie spokesman Greg Cox. As Mr. Mōnijâw scornfully phrases it: “aboriginal men are murdered extremely often, relative to all other groups, and their homicides are more rarely solved. And nobody really cares. And you can even say you don’t care in public, as a representative of the police. Because you know nobody else really cares either.”

As for the missing, the absence of statistics represents a shocking abdication of at least one public institution’s responsibility — perhaps worthy of a Charter challenge. But it is reasonable speculation that missing aboriginal men outnumber aboriginal women, perhaps by a wide margin. One would expect the ratio of murdered-men-to-women to carry over, roughly, to the ranks of the missing. Homeless and street populations in North American inner cities are likewise heavily male, including their indigenous component, and it is surely members of these most marginalized and fragmented communities that are most likely to fall off the precipice. They are probably also the most likely to be murdered by strangers, who are harder to track down than family members or known associates. *But we just don’t know*. That is shameful, and it requires urgent attention and redress.

It is not just the RCMP and Canadian political institutions that have turned a blind eye. The campaign to highlight the victimization and extermination of aboriginal women has become a feminist cause célèbre (including an aboriginal-feminist one), in a way that has suffocated consideration of even more pervasive patterns of violence among and against all aboriginal Canadians, including men and boys. All such campaigns reproduce, in central respects, ancient patriarchal/paternalistic constructions of women as especially vulnerable, fragile and dependent on outside aid and state intervention. That is an infantilizing framing, one best conveyed by the widely used scare statistics about “women and children.”

There is a casual brutality in the way this discursive strategy effaces the aboriginal male victim. And that effacement echoes beyond the immediate victim. Mr. Mōnijâw points out that the narrative places a special burden on those “who have actually experienced the murder of a family member in the most common of ways: their son or husband or brother was murdered by a stranger or acquaintance. I have worked with several aboriginal women who have suffered the enormous tragedy of seeing their son murdered — and they flat out do not have a voice. There is no outlet for them in this narrative. And in all the cases I know of ... the perpetrator was also an aboriginal male.”

When I raised these points on my Facebook page, I received a number of intriguing responses. One friend contended that we should welcome the gender-exclusive inquiry into murdered and missing aboriginal women, since it might also serve as a lever for consideration of missing and murdered aboriginal men. This was in keeping with the comments of David Gollob, a Canadian Human Rights Commission spokesperson, who expressed his full support for a women-focused inquiry: “It is conceivable that a public inquiry into murdered and missing aboriginal women and girls could touch on broader issues of violence and victimization of aboriginal people.”

How, I countered, would these respondents view the reverse argument: that we should focus on missing and murdered aboriginal men exclusively (recognizing the large proportion of male murder victims, the pervasive inattention to the missing, and so on), all in the faint hope that it might prompt consideration of missing and murdered aboriginal women? Would not such an arbitrary and inhumane framework spark widespread outrage?

Another friend argued that we should support and applaud the focus on aboriginal women because Canadians, like all humans, are naturally primed and attuned to respond sympathetically to the suffering of these “vulnerable” groups. So the murdered aboriginal teenager, Tina Fontaine, is a literally ideal symbol. Like other exponents of a women-and-children-first framing, he expressed a hope that the traditionally targeted discourse might serve as a springboard for discussing the plight of aboriginal men and boys. In the same way, depicting an attractive young homeless girl, as opposed to a grizzled homeless older man, would be a legitimate way of publicizing and fundraising to assist both.

I still beg to differ, although I recognize that in a way I am – preemptively – trying to “graft” our social norm of concern for women and girls/children in general, and

Aboriginal women and girls/children in this context, onto the population of Aboriginal men and boys that is so far conceptually obliterated. But if I were crafting that friend's campaign for the homeless, I would make sure to represent varied sectors of the afflicted population, in an attempt to be inclusive. I certainly would not strictly exclude the numerically-predominant element of older and younger homeless males.

Let me propose an adjusted agenda for activism and advocacy around the issue of murdered, missing and otherwise-victimized aboriginal Canadians. It seeks to do justice to both the special and the disproportionate vulnerabilities of First Nations women, especially with regard to domestic and sexual violence, and to the so-far ignored population of murdered, missing and otherwise-victimized aboriginal men. What we urgently need is a well-resourced inquiry into the roots of violence in and against aboriginal communities. What could be titled the First Nations Anti-Violence Initiative would assess topics such as the following:

- The structural violence of their continuing poverty, discrimination and dispossession from ancestral territories, as well as the reverberating trauma of the residential-school genocide.
- Indigenous communities' homicide and suicide epidemics.
- The white/European racism, hubris and obliviousness that continues to fuel the aboriginal social crisis and to prompt violence by whites/Europeans against aboriginal women and men.
- The specific and urgent issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls, centred on the domestic violence crisis afflicting aboriginal communities (including child abuse, elder abuse and partner abuse against males, and with attention to issues of alcohol and drug addiction).
- The specific issue of missing, murdered, homeless and addicted aboriginal men and boys, and their disproportionate representation among incarcerated juveniles and adults (with due consideration for native females, whose incarceration and institutionalization rates are also sky-high).
- The disruption and severing of family and community bonds through social-services interventions to sequester indigenous children, recognizing the need to protect aboriginal children from family and community violence, preferably through solutions designed and overseen by First Nations populations themselves.
- The psychological and counseling needs of all aboriginal survivors of violence, and their family members.
- The psychological and social afflictions of aboriginal perpetrators of violence, and how to assuage them.
- The wide variety of indigenous-generated proposals for change, restructuring, amelioration and restitution, including those directed at indigenous women, men, children and elders.

Such an initiative could be a watershed for aboriginal Canadians, and for all Canadians. It could parallel in its impact, and perhaps even surpass in its material and practical implications, the Truth Commission currently investigating Canada's past atrocities and injustices against native peoples. The ubiquitous demands for a gender-selective inquiry

into violence against aboriginal women, however, are a slap in the face to half the aboriginal population of our (and their) country. They also offend notions of fairness, inclusiveness and equality. The revised proposal would allow for the long-overdue inclusion of aboriginal men and boys in the political and public debate.

I admit there is something presumptuous in a white Canadian pronouncing on aboriginal suffering. I ask that this contribution be taken as a gesture of solidarity with all my aboriginal fellow citizens, sisters and brothers. I want to dedicate it, again presumptuously, to David James Taylor, a 42-year-old Ojibway man and Victoria resident. As I write, Taylor is *again* walking across the country to Ottawa, a five-month trek, stopping at indigenous communities en route to promote the cause of non-violence. “The walk to end violence is not just for the many murdered and missing women,” Taylor told the *Victoria Times Colonist*. “It is for indigenous men and youth as well. It’s important to bring back our core values and traditional teachings to deal with this. It affects everyone.”

Direct Link: <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/adam-jones-aboriginal-men-are-murdered-and-missing-far-more-than-aboriginal-women-a-proper-inquiry-would-explore-both>

Gender Block: the continued dehumanization of Aboriginal women and sex workers

by [Hillary Di Menna](#), April 27, 2015



Just after noon on April 2, the crowded bodies rallying outside of the Ministry of the Attorney General at 720 Bay St., Toronto (one of many like rallies being held across the country) were told that prosecutors were appealing the acquittal of Cindy Gladue’s alleged murderer. The joy from this news did not completely subside the nation’s outrage, nor should it.

Gladue, a 36-year-old Indigenous mother, died four years ago after spending two nights with Bradley Barton in an Edmonton motel room. Gladue was a sex worker in Alberta and Barton says she died as a result of consensual rough sex. The sex worker was found with a 11 cm vaginal wound. Prosecution believes the wound was caused by a sharp weapon, while Barton insists it was only his fingers. The event page for the April 2 rally reads: “Cindy’s death is a reminder that Indigenous women’s lives and sex workers’ lives are not valued in this deeply racist, sexist and misogynist society.”

A deeply saddening fact is that what has happened to Gladue, as a sex worker and as an Indigenous woman, is not uncommon. When called upon to perform a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women Harper has said it is unnecessary, as it is not, in his opinion, a [sociological phenomenon](#), nor is it [on his radar](#).

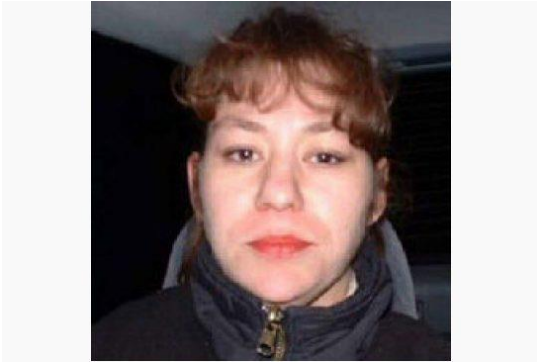
This case got extra media attention for not only an unfair verdict, decided upon by a jury without a single Indigenous member, but also because of the precedent it set in terms of evidence. Gladue’s reproductive organs were used as court evidence. Julie Kaye, an assistant professor of sociology and director of Community Engaged Research at The King’s University in Edmonton tells [CTV](#) that the use of Gladue’s preserved vagina as evidence brought to the courtroom was another violent act, “I think it’s important to recognize that, as her body was placed on display, that was seen as a very dehumanizing act.”

Gladue was victimized, by her murderer and the Canadian justice system, for being both Aboriginal and a sex worker. [Maggie’s Toronto](#), an organization run by and for sex workers, frequently reports cases of abuse against workers. For example, last week a man was arrested for [robbing a sex worker](#). Three weeks ago media released [stories](#) about a woman being confined and sexually assaulted for five days. As an Aboriginal woman, Gladue is objectified sexually as an exotic [Other](#). This is nothing new, just look at the [controversy surrounding Adam Sandler’s new movie](#), in which Native American women are named No Bra and Beaver’s Breath. The actors who walked off the set were told they were too sensitive and didn’t understand the joke. A joke that comes from, and reinforces, the sentiment that Aboriginal women are meant to be sexualized and dehumanized, which is, incidentally, the same rational behind ignoring the cases of [Canada’s missing and murdered Aboriginal women](#).

Direct Link: <http://this.org/blog/2015/04/27/gender-block-the-continued-dehumanization-of-aboriginal-women-and-sex-workers/>

Remains of aboriginal woman missing for 10 years discovered in Alberta woods

Found in the same area where other human remains were located in 2003 and 2012



Delores Dawn Brower is shown in an RCMP handout photo. Mounties say human remains found south of Edmonton have been identified as a missing Metis woman. Brower, who went by the nickname Spider, was a sex trade worker last seen hitching a ride in Edmonton in 2004.

By: The Canadian Press, Published on Tue Apr 28 2015

EDMONTON—Mounties say human remains found south of Edmonton have been identified as a missing Metis woman.

Delores Dawn Brower, who went by the nickname Spider, was a sex trade worker last seen hitching a ride in Edmonton in 2004.

The 33-year-old was reported missing by her family a year later.

RCMP say her remains were discovered last week in a wooded area near Leduc.

A medical examiner was unable to determine a cause of death.

RCMP say Brower was found in the same area where other human remains were located in 2003 and 2012.

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/04/28/remains-of-aboriginal-woman-missing-for-10-years-discovered-in-alberta-woods.html>

Special Topic: International Indigenous Populations

Australian Aboriginal Communities Under Threat of Closure Take Their Case to the UN

By [Scott Mitchell](#)

April 24, 2015 | 5:51 am

Over 150 Aboriginal communities in Australia could be forced to shutdown as the government has cut off services to their land. Now community leaders have taken their fight to the United Nations, calling for the UN rapporteur on indigenous rights to investigate the way Australian governments have handled the closures.

Remote Aboriginal communities across Western Australia (WA) will be cut off from electricity, water and all basic services on July 1 after the federal government cut funding for them, and the WA state government refused to fill the gap. As many as 278 communities are being assessed, and over 150 are scheduled to have their switches flicked off.

"The forced closure of indigenous communities [is] attempting once again to separate people from their land and culture," according to Anthony Watson, chairman on the Kimberley Lands Council (KLC), who spoke to VICE News after appearing at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York.

"It's my first time here, and I've been surprised by the amount of support we've got," he said, relaying that indigenous delegates from around the world had been extremely enthusiastic in helping push the case that his organization had brought before the forum. "It's because in this day and age, people know that this kind of thing happening in a country like Australia shouldn't be tolerated."

The KLC represents the traditional owners of the lands in the northwestern Kimberley region, home to most of West Australia's remote indigenous communities. They most likely will bear the brunt of the closures, and have decided to take the issue of indigenous community closures to the UN forum — which is running between April 20 and May 1 — after being repeatedly blocked from engaging with the political process domestically.

Last month, Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott said indigenous people were making a "lifestyle choice" if they lived in remote areas.

"What we can't do is endlessly subsidize lifestyle choices if those lifestyle choices are not conducive to the kind of full participation in Australian society that everyone should have," he [said](#).

The KLC's submission to the UN questioned whether such a political stance was against the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, which includes the right not to be assimilated and the right not to be removed from traditional lands.

"We would hope that no state that purports to endorse the declaration can maintain that the rights embodied within that declaration are a lifestyle choice," reads the submission.

As well as support from indigenous delegates, Anthony related that Victoria Tauli Corpuz, the UN rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, had taken an interest in pursuing the case.

"I believe she will come to Australia to visit us in the Kimberley," Anthony said. "We look forward to engaging further."

The possibility of a UN investigation would probably earn the ire of Australia's prime minister who said in March that Australians were "sick of being lectured to by the United Nations." The outburst came after the special rapporteur on torture found Australia was violating the rights of asylum seekers, including children, who it has imprisoned indefinitely in detention centers on a number of Pacific islands.

"Our calls in Australia for engagement, discussion and empowerment have fallen on deaf ears," Anthony continued, explaining the KLC had no choice but take its issues to the international community. "It's shameful," he added.

So far, Aboriginal lands councils have not been privy to any consultations with Australian politicians, despite federal funding for the communities coming to an end on July 1 and community closures believed to begin by the end of the year.

Anthony explained that his organization had, and continues, to invite West Australian Premier Colin Barnett to a summit of indigenous leaders to discuss the closures.

Instead of receiving a reply, the offer was dismissed in an [interview](#) given in the state capital, Perth.

"We want to see Aboriginal people succeed, we want to see their children have a safe life and a fair chance at life through a good education," he said.

Direct Link: <https://news.vice.com/article/australian-aboriginal-communities-under-threat-of-closure-take-their-case-to-the-un>

Ely Parker, The Civil War's Native American General

04.25.15 12:00 AM ET

Called a "real American" by Robert E. Lee, Parker was a uniquely American success story.

Most anniversary commemorations of the Confederacy's surrender 150-years ago in April, 1865, overlooked a meaningful exchange at that little courthouse in Appomattox, Va. After the proud defeated commander, Robert E. Lee, formally surrendered to the

short, squat, sloppy winner, Ulysses S. Grant, Grant introduced Lee to his staff. As Lee shook hands with Grant's military secretary Ely Parker, a Seneca Indian, the Confederate general stared a moment at Parker's dark features. "I am glad to see one real American here," the Virginian said. Parker immediately replied: "We are all Americans."

That, ultimately, was what the war had been all about, just who was an American and what did that mean. Northerners had gone to war—and to their deaths—singing "Glory, Glory Hallelujah," a song, written by a New England abolitionist, Julia Ward Howe, evoking the Book of Revelation, capturing the millennial idealism that was and is America. Singing "His truth is marching on" imagines a nation of nations, stronger, prouder, freer, than any other, a chosen nation, blessed as more democratic, welcoming, equal, righteous—and thus occasionally more self-righteous—than any other country.

Their Confederate brothers had less grandiose motives. They sang "In Dixie Land I'll take my stand, an' lib an' die in Dixie." A song epitomizing love of home, this provincial anthem cherished both individual autonomy and regional or ethnic solidarity in a centralizing, homogenizing, nation. Ironically, tragically, disgustingly, the Southerners—most of whom were not slaveholders—defended their liberty, their freedom, their prerogatives, with provincial prejudices that hurt and enslaved three million others.

At its best, this glorious selfishness, combining individualism, provincialism, and a "devil may care" spirit, has shaped Americans' entrepreneurial and libertarian impulses, especially when balanced by the North's selfish gloriousness, this grandiose vision of an ideal world which often looked astonishingly like each American's own backyard.

That "real American," Ely Parker, lived those paradoxes. Always proud of his people, frequently bruised by prejudice, but ultimately liberated by America at its most glorious, expansive, and redemptive, Hasanowanda, "The Reader," was born in 1828 on the Towanda Indian Reservation in western New York. Mocked as a young boy while working at an army post for speaking pidgin English, he ultimately became renowned for his eloquence in the language, with penmanship so impressive he won the privilege of drafting the surrender documents ending the Civil War. Ambitious to advance in the white man's world, he changed his name to Ely Samuel Parker, with Ely pronounced e-Lee as in Robert E. Lee.

Unfortunately, Parker faced the kind of prejudice that unified Southerners—and that would persist despite the Northern victory. He apprenticed to be a lawyer for three years, only to discover that as a Seneca Indian—one of six nations making up the Iroquois confederation—he was not an American citizen and thus ineligible for the bar. Native Americans would secure those basic rights only in 1924 with the Indian Citizenship Act. In the 1860s, when Parker patriotically tried raising a regiment of Iroquois to fight for the North, New York state officials sneered, "The Civil War is a white man's war... we will settle our own troubles without any Indian aid."

A true American, Parker overcame bigotry with pluck and luck. He studied civil engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic in Troy, N.Y. Committed to his Native people

despite his all-American ambitions, in 1852 he became a sachem, a subordinate chief renamed Donehogawa, Keeper of the Western Door of the Long House of the Iroquois.

After working on the Erie Canal, Parker ended up at the Mississippi River town of Galena, Ill. There, he befriended, a slovenly, often drunk, former West Point Army captain working as a store clerk. By 1864, that slob was Abraham Lincoln's best general. Parker served as U.S. Grant's military secretary as they fought their way toward Appomattox, eventually becoming the Union's only Native American Brigadier General.

In 1869, now-President Grant made Parker the first Native American Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Parker's fair, honest approach toward the Indian tribes alienated his Washington rivals. They blasted Grant for appointing a man "who is but a remove from barbarism." Undeterred. Parker tried balancing his loyalty to his tribe with his loyalty to his country. Occasionally [wondering](#) "whether it has been well that I have sought civilization with its bothersome concomitants," he yearned to return to nature's "darkness and sacred wilds." Alas, he realized: "The thought is a happy one, but perhaps impracticable."

When Parker rushed aid to starving Indians out West without publicizing bids properly, his enemies [filed](#) 13 charges of misconduct against him. The resulting Congressional hearing exonerated him—and praised his leadership. Yet the scandal demoralized Parker. He resigned in 1871.

This 19th-century Forrest Gump followed his work on developing the nation's infrastructure, ending slavery, and Americanizing the West, by experiencing the great post-Civil War Boom, which was then followed by the Bust triggered by the Jay Gould-inspired Panic of 1873. Parker ended his career clerking in Theodore Roosevelt's police headquarters in New York, as Progressives began reforming the cities. The photographer and urban chronicler, Jacob Riis, was very taken with this "noble old fellow," who died in 1895. Parker's only child, Maud Theresa, born in 1878, died in 1956—demonstrating just how few lifespans separate modern Americans from our founders, let alone nineteenth-century heroes like Ely Parker.

Unlike the fictional Gump, this "real American's" history-making was purposeful not accidental, active not passive. Talented and ambitious, he made himself into a role model for today, not just for Native Americans, but for all Americans who wish to retain their own particular ethnic or religious identity while being patriotic and who wish to advance themselves personally while contributing collectively.

The prejudice Parker endured reflected the selfishness and sinfulness we have not yet exorcised. But his success demonstrates the power of those glorious basic American rights hundreds of millions exercise every day, transforming obstacles into opportunities. The story of Ely Parker, "the real American" at Appomattox, teaches us that America remains the land of liberty and opportunity, the home of a welcoming, empowering, often epoch-making American dream, powerful enough to eclipse whatever demons, both personal and collective, we face.

Direct Link: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/04/25/ely-parker-the-civil-war-s-native-american-general.html>

University Party in Michigan Reveals Unsafe Climate For Native American Students on Campus

[Simon Moya-Smith](#)

4/25/15

It was noon on April 11, and Nathan Phillips was out collecting wood for his sweat lodge. He has one in his backyard next to a fire pit, and at least once a month he'll have people over to pray. The 60-year-old former Marine and member of the Omaha Tribe said he often roams near his home in Ypsilanti, Michigan scouring for loose branches, cleaning up neighbors' yards in the process to make a few bucks. Phillips is unemployed, and he'll sell whatever wood he doesn't use for the lodge.

But, on that day, his normal stroll went bad within a matter of minutes.

Phillips was passing through an open parking lot when he heard someone shout at him. He turned to look and saw a group of people gathered at a home just on the other side of a four-foot fence; he said the house was pulsating with energy, which isn't unusual for that area of Ypsilanti with Eastern Michigan University less than a mile away. "Come on over!" a voice yelled. From a distance, Phillips couldn't see any of the party-goer's faces or make out what they were wearing. He said all he could detect was the cacophony of noise and a myriad of colors on top of their heads.

Phillips set down his bundle of wood and began to head toward the home. As he got closer, he could see the men were young and white with faces painted red, and some also donned multi-colored faux feathers. It was later reported that many of those in attendance at the party were EMU students.

"The guy who called me over said something ridiculous," Phillips recalled. "He said, 'We're having an impregnation party!'"

Suddenly, about four alleged college students – all male and dressed like plains Indians – approached Phillips and apologized for their inebriated friend. Phillips asked the group what they were doing, what kind of party they were having. According to Phillips, one student responded, "We're honoring Indians. We're honoring you."

A voice from within the crowd then shouted, "Fuck the Eagles! We're the Hurons."

Huron vs. Eagles

In 1991, Eastern Michigan University retired its Huron moniker and Native American mascot. The university had used the Indian caricature for 62 years before people in the community, including the Michigan Civil Rights Commission, protested its use, arguing it perpetuated racism against Indians.

Geoff Larcom, executive director of media relations at EMU, told *ICTMN* in an email that the university was one of the first institutions in the country to change its Native American mascot due to “concerns about the negative stereotypes reinforced by such logos and representations, and in the spirit of multicultural awareness.”

Today, Eastern Michigan University is the Eagles.

Yet, although the Native American Huron mascot has been retired for nearly 25 years – and although the corresponding logo has since been deemed to reinforce negative stereotypes – the caricature still lives on in school-sanctioned band uniforms.

There’s also a [website](#), the Huron Restoration Alumni Chapter, dedicated to the return of the Huron mascot where graduates can buy shirts and bumper stickers reading, “Once a Huron, Always a Huron.”



The old Eastern Michigan University mascot, the "Huron." The mascot was retired in 1991 after community members said the caricature was offensive to Native Americans.

When *ICTMN* asked Larcom why the retired mascot is still used on official campus uniforms, he wrote that its in homage to an era of the band’s history. He added that the controversial logo is situated “on an inside flap of the jacket that is not publicly visible during performances or public appearances.”

‘Campus Culture Is Not Safe’

When Amber Morseau walked onto the EMU campus four years ago she couldn’t have known that one day she’d quit the university’s color guard in protest of the resurrection of the Huron mascot.

Morseau, who's Pokagon Band of Potawatomi and the president of EMU's Native American Student Organization (NASO), said it was at band camp during her junior year that the university added the ousted Huron mascot to the uniforms.

"I didn't know what to do," she said. "The band director said there was absolutely nothing they could do."

Morseau and other members of NASO later approached university President Susan Martin who admitted to them that she personally authorized the resurrection of the old Indian mascot. Morseau said she told Martin that the mascot creates a hostile environment for the few Native American students there are on campus. She asked Martin if that mattered.

"She avoided the question," Morseau said.

Now a senior, Morseau said although there are faculty members and staff who support the Native American students on campus and even look out for them, she feels safer when she leaves EMU than she does walking about her peers on campus.

Once in a while, an alumnus who's aware of her opposition to the Huron mascot will call her a "squaw" among other pejoratives.

"Fucking Indian, redskins, stuff like that," she said.

"As far as in the classroom? Yes, it's safe. Campus culture – it's not safe," she added. "Five miles away from campus I feel fine, but it's when [I'm] on campus I feel threatened."

Vice President of NASO Michelle Lietz agreed with Morseau, saying lately the climate on campus has been increasing hostile toward Native Americans.

"There have been times in the past when we have felt unsafe. Recently, we have definitely felt unsafe," she told *ICTMN*. "Mostly what we experience are micro aggressions."

Lietz, who's a graduate student of literature and a Yaqui, said NASO's concerns regarding their physical safety are due largely to the return of the Huron mascot. Their request to see it dropped (a second time) falls on deaf administrative ears.

"[The mascot] fosters a hostile environment for Native people," Lietz said. "They told us it was just on the band uniforms – that it was uniting EMU's past with its present."



The old Eastern Michigan University "Huron" mascot portrayed a snarling, humpbacked Native American caricature.

Morseau, however, wonders why the university would hide the Indian logo on the inside flap of the jacket if it weren't concerned it would cause controversy.

"For them to hide it behind a flap, it seems like they're trying to get away with something," she said. "Everybody knows that it's there. You're hiding it."

‘Hey, Chief. Want a Beer?’

Nathan Phillips was outnumbered. He stood before a group of unruly white men dressed as faux Indians who claimed they were honoring him and all Native Americans at a party just a short walk from campus. Phillips said he attempted to enlighten the group by telling them what they were doing was racist.

"And as soon as I said 'racist' [it was], 'Fuck you!' And then they started saying, 'Go back to the rez!' 'Get the fuck out of here!' 'We've got fucking rights!'"

Phillips, who's 30-years sober, said a white man at that moment asked him if he wanted a beer.

"Hey, chief. Want a beer?" the man yelled.

Phillips refused. So the man chucked an unopened can of beer at Phillips, striking him the chest.

"It got me pretty good," he said. "It did have a little sting to it."

He wanted to throw it right back at the guy, Phillips said, but then he felt as though his departed relatives were telling him not to, so he grabbed the can, popped it open and poured the contents onto the ground. As the beer spouted and splashed onto the earth, an eerie silence hung in the air, Phillips said.

Moments later, a group of the party-goers began charging the fence, according to Phillips, so he grabbed his cell phone out of his pocket and called the police.

“They all blazed. It was like turning on the lights and the roaches scattered as soon as I got the phone in my hand and dialed 9-1-1,” he said.



Nathan Phillips, Omaha, called 9-1-1 after party-goers dressed in faux Native American garb charged the fence. Photo courtesy rawstory.com.

In hindsight, Phillips said he should’ve just walked by and not responded to the man beckoning him over to the house.

“I was just trying to figure out how I was going to eat that day,” he said. “It was good day to go out looking for things, seeing what’s out there, putting my prayers out there.”

Phillips moved to the area eight years ago after his wife was diagnosed with cancer; she’s currently being treated at the University of Michigan, he said. Meanwhile, he receives Section-8 assistance and lives on \$22 a month and tries to supplement that with his wood collection all the while dodging racist encounters about Ypsilanti.

“I’ve been on the north side now two years,” he said. “I was over there – the black side of town – for seven, eight years [with] no problems. But then we moved [to] the north side, the college side of town [where I’ve been] accosted on the streets.”

Phillips’ two kids do not attend public school “because of racism” in the city.

“There’s just people who can’t just let go of being mad at Indians,” Phillips said with a hint of disappointment.

A statement by the university sent to *ICTMN* said EMU works to foster an “inclusive and safe environment” for everyone on campus.

“Eastern Michigan University takes these matters very seriously and remains strongly committed to maintaining a respectful, inclusive and safe environment, in which acts that

seek to inflict physical, psychological or emotional harm on specific demographic groups will not be tolerated,” the statement reads.

But for Moreseau, maintaining a safe environment at EMU begins with the administration hearkening the call of its Native American students and by recognizing that they are consistently discriminated by the pro-Huron mascot advocates on campus.

Until then, Morseau said the Native American students will keep an eye on one another. It's all they can do.

“There’s safety in numbers,” she said.

So, as the university continues its investigation into the Indian-themed party, Phillips continues looking for word about Ypsilanti, and the members of NASO just try to make it safely from one class to the next on a campus still clinging to its Native American mascot.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/04/25/university-party-michigan-reveals-unsafe-climate-native-american-students-campus-160140>

Native youth tackle tough issues as part of national Generation Indigenous initiative

Published April 25, 2015

[Associated Press](#)

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. – Janay Jumping Eagle is on a mission to curb teen suicide in her hometown on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Dakota Brown of the Wilton Band of Miwok Indians in California wants to keep American Indian and Alaska Native students on track toward graduation.

The teenagers are at the heart of Generation Indigenous, or Gen-I, a White House initiative that kicked off this week with a brainstorming session that coincided with thousands of indigenous people gathering in New Mexico for North America's largest powwow.

The initiative stems from a visit last year by President Barack Obama to the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota. The goal is to improve the lives of tribal youth by challenging them to tackle some of the problems that have plagued Indian Country for decades.

Direct Link: <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2015/04/25/native-youth-tackle-tough-issues-as-part-national-generation-indigenous/>

Native American Actors Defend Adam Sandler's 'Ridiculous 6'

"It's a comedy, not a documentary," said an extra who remained on set despite the controversy over the film's offensive script

By [Daniel Kreps](#) April 26, 2015



Some Native American actors have spoken out in defense of Adam Sandler's Western comedy 'Ridiculous 6'

A few Native American actors are now speaking out in defense of Adam Sandler's Netflix comedy *Ridiculous 6* after [a dozen extras walked off the Western's New Mexico set](#) over what they viewed as culturally offensive humor. Of the hundreds of Native American extras hired for the film, only about a dozen left the production because they were offended by characters' names – "Wears No Bra" and "Beaver Breath" – and felt the film perpetuated negative stereotypes.

However, the majority of the Native American extras remained on set, including actor Bonifacio Gurule, who [told KOAT 7 in Albuquerque](#) that those who exited the film should "lighten up." "It's a comedy, not a documentary," Gurule said. Another extra named Carma Harvey said many cultures, not just Native Americans', were being skewered in the Western.

KOAT also obtained [cellphone footage of the verbal confrontation](#) between extras and an unspecified member of the *Ridiculous 6* crew that led to some actors leaving *Ridiculous 6* set. In the video, the extras ask a producer to change the character's name of "Beaver Breath." "No. If you're overly sensitive about it, then you should probably leave," the producer said. As Navajo actress Allie Young previously told MSNBC, [the first person to exit the *Ridiculous 6* shoot](#) over the offensive material was the film's cultural consultant.

While Sandler has not commented publicly on the incident, following the extras walkout, the actor reportedly addressed the cast and crew and said he was extremely sorry if the film offended anyone. A producer also promised the cast that some sort of disclaimer at the end of the movie would reiterate that *Ridiculous 6* is not an accurate portrayal of Native American culture.

Following the uproar, the New Mexico Film Office was asked whether they would rescind the rebates given to the film for shooting in the Land of Enchantment. "It is a First Amendment issue. The film office has no control over a film's content," the New Mexico Film Office said in a statement. "As long as the production meets the requirements in the film credit statute, there is nothing prohibiting them from filming in New Mexico and receiving the rebate."

In a statement, Netflix also defended the film. "The movie has 'ridiculous' in the title for a reason –because it is ridiculous," a spokesperson for the company said. "It is a broad satire of Western movies and the stereotypes they popularized, featuring a diverse cast that is not only part of – but in on – the joke."

Read more: <http://www.rollingstone.com/movies/news/native-american-actors-defend-adam-sanders-ridiculous-6-20150426#ixzz3YXdarSDH>

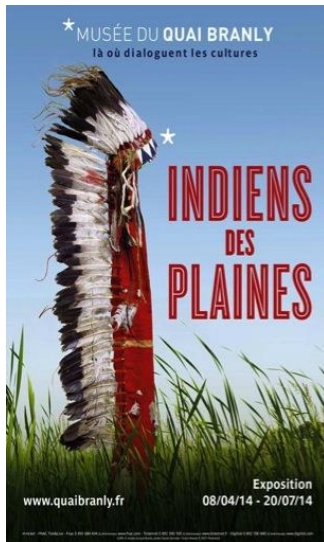
Horse Capture: 'Native People Have a Story to Tell – Their Own'

[Joe Horse Capture](#)

4/25/15

The relationship (or lack thereof) between museums and Native Americans has been problematic for generations.

Historically viewed as icons of the past, Native American communities have had limited input on how their culture is presented in many museum exhibitions. I would like to take this opportunity to examine the most recent exhibition, "The Plains Indians [cue the flute music]: Artists of Earth and Sky," through the lense of my 17-plus years of museum experience. These observations are my own, and do not represent the views of any institution, government agency, or sovereign Native nation. Do not pass go, do not collect \$200.



A few years ago, I was approached to contribute to the exhibition catalog, and my first question was, “Who are the Native partners?” No partners, but plenty of Native consultants. This formula, where Native people are consultants to the project and the non-Native organizers reserve the option to reject their input, is problematic. It was at that point I decided not to have anything to do with the project or see the exhibition, which I have not nor will. Major exhibition projects that use Native people as consultants instead of developing meaningful partnerships is a subject worthy of examination. The use of Native consultation should have ended with the community-curated exhibitions at the National Museum of the American Indian in 2004. A partner relationship would benefit both parties. Native people have a story to tell – their own. And there are plenty of Native people in the field that would qualify as true partners.

The organizers and venues have highlighted Native participation in the programming of the exhibition, and many distinguished people has served as presenters, performers, interviewees, demonstrators, etc. Furthermore, a few Native people have contributed to the catalog (which has no bearing on the curatorial direction of the exhibition). But those roles are secondary to the curatorial role in the exhibition, where the main ideas originate and reside. Asserting Native voice in the exhibition is represented by gigantic blow-up photographs of Native people in the exhibition, quotes, videos, interviews, representation in the gift shop, participation in the catalog, is inaccurate and disingenuous. If one steps back and looks at the entirety of the exhibition, its organization, the presentation at three distinguished venues (Musée du quai Branly, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art), and the catalog, it becomes evident that true Native partnerships is lacking.

The catalog itself is beautifully designed, and many of its contributors are highly respected in the Native American art history field, and, naturally, the works featured in the catalog are also included in the exhibition. A few of these objects are deemed sensitive by many traditional Native people and communities and should have not been part of the exhibition or published without tribal permission.

The most glaring example is the Southern Arapaho Ghost Dance Dress. As a sacred religious movement of the 19th century, the Ghost Dance has a particular sensitivity due to the spiritual energy that is imbued in associated works. Because of the massacre at Wounded Knee at the hands of the U.S. Seventh Cavalry on the prairie of South Dakota on December 29, 1890, there is a well-known sensitivity with Ghost Dance material no matter which tribal group created it.

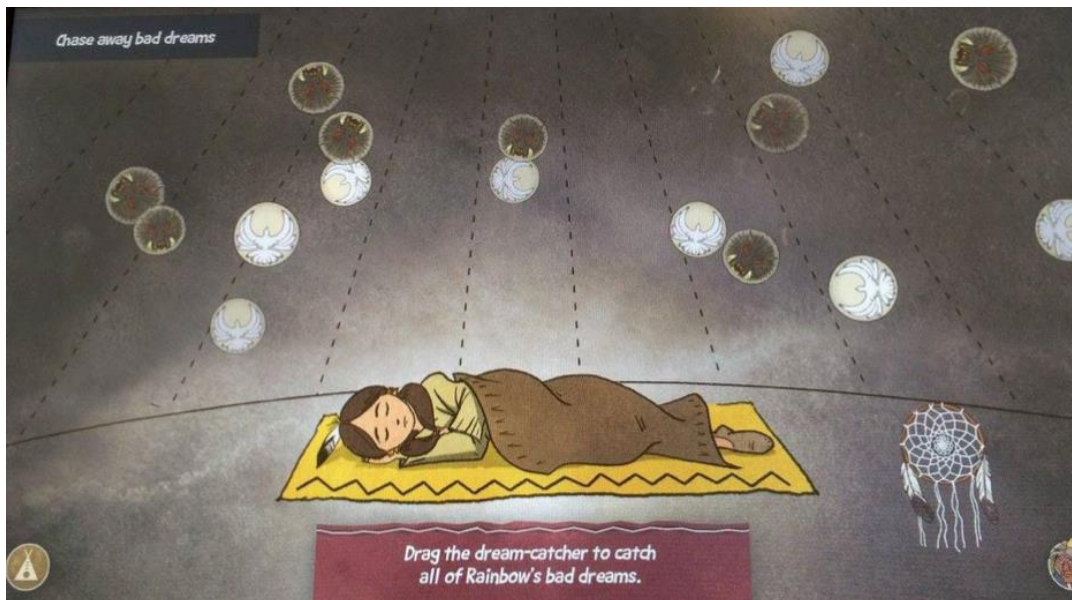
Actually, many museums whose holdings include Ghost Dance material refuse to lend or display it without tribal consent. But the dress appears in the exhibition and catalog and was borrowed from a private collection. There is no statement in the catalog that the Arapaho Tribal Councils or Cultural Preservation offices approved the display of their sacred material.

Secondly, among many Native traditionalists, pipe bowls with stems were, and continue to be a tool used for prayer, a way to communicate with the Creator. Traditionalists believe that when the pipe bowl and stem are joined, the pipe becomes 'active,' and ready for use within a ceremonial context. Many museums pay careful attention not to join the two together for display or publication out of respect for Native cultural traditions. But not in the "The Plains Indians: Artists of Earth and Sky" catalog. There are several instances where the two are joined together on pages 114, 198, and 222. For many Native traditionalists, this is offensive.

An exhibition encompasses more than just the display of objects; one must examine the entirety including programming, advertising, and educational material. These are the aspects of an exhibition that average visitor consumes. In Europe, the main advertising image was that of a lone feathered headdress floating magically in a field of tall green grass. The majestic Plains Indian. Romantic, nameless, and faceless. Surprisingly, this perspective is compatible with the theme of the show, a general overview of a cultural region. Despite the fact that many museums have moved away from survey shows, in favor of digging deeper into a subject, understanding that Native art and culture is complex. I have previously mentioned the programming of the exhibition that included Native involvement, but we also need to examine the educational materials that were produced. The first and the organizing venue, was Musée du quai Branly, located in Paris, France. Known for their outstanding ethnographic collections, it also serves as a beacon for everything non-Western in Europe.

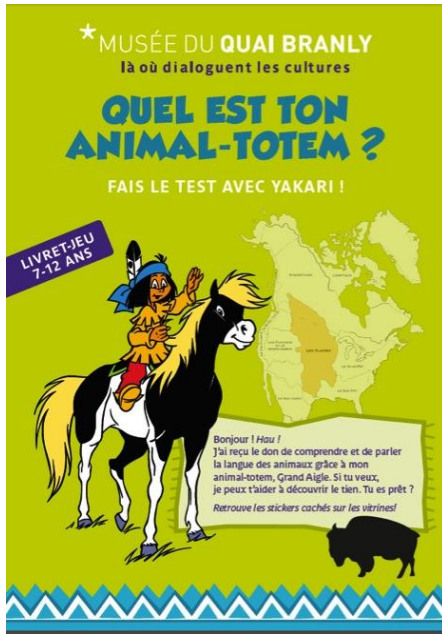
One must keep in mind that the vast majority of Europeans have little or no contact with Native culture or people. Most of their knowledge comes from romanticized depictions of Natives in the media or from the legacy of the German novelist Karl May. Any exposure to Native culture would be an important opportunity to teach a European audience properly about Native Americans, to dispel stereotypes and myths. Considering thousands of Parisians visited the exhibition one must look closely at the experience and educational opportunities during their visit. The interactive education tool that was in the gallery at the Musée du quai Branly features an animated caricature of a young Native boy named Yukari, who goes on different adventures during the seasonal year. His adviser, an elder referred to as "Tranquil Rock," guides Yukari through the process. For

winter, the Native girl “Rainbow” is sick and Yukari needs to find herbs to heal her. As she sleeps, the user of the interactive uses an animated dream catcher to “protect me from bad dreams.”



Throughout this educational tool, users shoot at targets with an animated bow and arrows, understand the parts of the buffalo, and various other activities. There are multiple issues with this interactive educational tool, too many to mention here. For example in one scene, three different Native cultural regions are represented within a plains tipi. Southwest ceramics, Woodlands dream catcher, and plains outfits.

A separate educational curricula that can be found on the Musée du quai Branly's website, and one can assume this was distributed at the museum during the exhibition, is an educational game targeted towards children ages 7 to 12 to further inform them about Plains Indian culture. Titled, "[What's Your Animal Totem?](#)" the child learns about different objects in the exhibition, take tests, and discuss shields. At the end of the teaching tool, a series of questions are asked of the child to determine their personal animal totem. Once one has been chosen, they are encouraged to draw their animal totem on blank paper shield. In traditional Plains culture, shields are highly regarded as spiritual items, and the imagery painted on shields reference a vision that was given to its owner. Shields are a serious matter, and it is grossly inappropriate for child's play. These "educational" tools do nothing to promote accurate and respectful information about plains Indian art and culture. I believe they do more harm than good by enforcing negative stereotypes and creating an environment where non-Native children are encouraged to play Native American.



I believe that, if the exhibition organizers had developed a real and meaningful partnership with a Native individual or community, many of these issues with the exhibition and its associated educational resources would have been avoided. There are many Native people in the field that are very qualified to co-curate the project. This idea of collaboration and partnerships is not new to the museum field. A couple great examples of this can be found in the work of Heather Ahtone (Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art) and Daniel C. Swan (Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History). They work in partnership/collaboration with Native communities that benefit both parties.

For the sake of this discussion, let's assume the project could not find any Native partnerships. There are several options. Since working on a large-scale Native art exhibition is a rare occurrence, it would have been a perfect opportunity to have a Native American intern or fellow to learn the process and have input in curatorial direction and educational materials. There are many museums in the United States that have developed programs to train Native Americans in the hopes that they would enter the museum field; The Peabody Essex Museum and the National Museum of the American Indian are two good examples. Pass on the knowledge; share it with Native people so they can enter the museum field.

Send exhibition catalogs to tribal college libraries across the plains for free. Since the vast majority of Native people will never see the exhibition, why not insure that the life of the exhibition lives on in Native communities? The catalog could serve as a great educational resource for tribal colleges. Spreading the research and information into Indian Country is critically important, as well as training the next generation of Native American museum professionals.

The cycle of museums displaying and interpreting Native American art and culture with no benefit towards Native people needs to stop. Now.

Lastly and on a personal note, it has been mentioned numerous times by the organizers of the exhibition that my father, George P. Horse Capture Sr., was a consultant for this exhibition, and implies that he endorsed this project. My father was a distinguished Native American curator, one of the first in the country, and dedicated his life and profession towards the betterment of Native people. The Creator called him home in April 2013. Since he and I are both in the museum field, we had many discussions about projects, exhibitions, and objects. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to learn from him. Recalling our conversations, I can honestly say that he was not a supporter of this project. He would often mention that Native people do not need another exhibition about Native art organized by a non-Native person for a non-Native audience. We both believe in meaningful Native partnerships.

It would be remiss of me not to take this opportunity to relay a story my father often told me and has been confirmed by others. Several years ago, there was a planning forum for this exhibition called by the project organizers. Many highly respected people in the Native American art field attended, many who did not have input in the exhibition, but wrote for the catalog. According to those who were at the meeting, the only two Native people that were present at this meeting were my father and a respected Lakota historian/curator. As the story goes, my father walks into the full meeting room, looks around and asks, "Where are all the Indians?"

Joe D. Horse Capture (A'aninin) has worked in the museum field for more than 17 years. He has served as guest curator for many museums and is widely published. He was Associate Curator of Native American Art at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts for 15 years, and is currently an Associate Curator for the National Museum of the American Indian-Smithsonian Institution. The views in this article are his own.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/04/25/horse-capture-native-people-have-story-tell-their-own-160144>

Native Americans are the unseen victims of a broken US justice system

[Jake Flanagan](#)

2 hours ago



An embroidered American flag flies next to a jewelry stand on a Navajo reservation in Arizona.(Reuters/Mike Blake)

A federal panel is finally looking into one of the least examined problems plaguing the US justice system: are Native Americans living on reservations disproportionately dealt harsher punishments for crimes than other Americans?

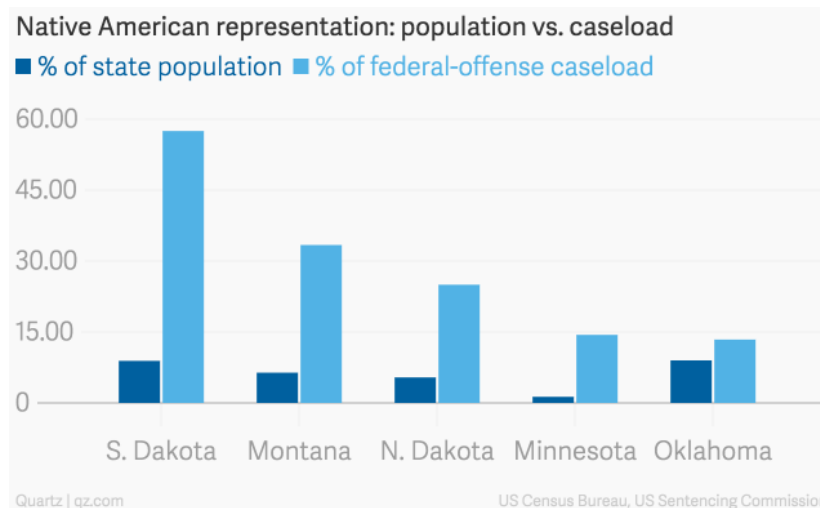
Earlier in April, The Wall Street Journal [spoke with Ralph Erickson](#) (paywall), a chief federal district court judge for North Dakota. Erickson, an outspoken proponent of sentencing reforms for Native American reservations, is spearheading the federal review. Called the Tribal Issues Advisory Group, the panel is made up of 22 judges and law enforcement administrators, 11 of which are Native American.

“No matter how long I have been sentencing in Indian Country, I find it gut-wrenching when I am asked by a family member of a person I have sentenced why Indians are sentenced to longer sentences than white people who commit the same crime,” Erickson confided to The Journal’s Dan Frosch.

Frosch accounts for this disparity by dissecting the process by which certain crimes are prosecuted on reservations. “Native Americans are typically prosecuted under federal law for serious offenses committed on reservations,” he explains. “State punishments for the same crimes tend to be lighter.”

Native men are incarcerated at four times the rate of white men. This is not the first time judges have raised concerns over reservation sentencing disparities. The Journal reports that the US Sentencing Commission conducted a similar review over ten years ago—but it resulted in few material changes. In the past five years alone, the number of Native Americans incarcerated in federal prisons has increased by 27%. In South Dakota, the state with the fourth highest percentage of Native American residents, Native Americans compose 60% of the federal caseload, but only 8.5% of the total population.

The trend continues across states with similarly substantial Native populations: they constitute a third of the caseload in Montana, a quarter in North Dakota, 14% in Minnesota, and 13% in Oklahoma, according to [Sentencing Commission data](#).



The Journal's findings only scratch the surface of this problem, however. Studies on the racial breakdown of incarceration and criminal punishment in the US show Native Americans to be far overrepresented in US jails and prisons. Yet, compared to other similarly disenfranchised groups, media reportage and scholarly analyses of the issue are few and far between.

- Native Americans are incarcerated at a rate [38% higher](#) than the national average, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- Native American youths are [30% more likely](#) than whites to be referred to juvenile court than have charges dropped, according to National Council on Crime and Delinquency.
- Native Americans are [more likely to be killed by police](#) than any other racial group, according to the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice.
- Native American men are [incarcerated at four times the rate of white men](#); Native American women are incarcerated at six times the rate of white women, according to a report compiled by the Lakota People's Law Project.
- Native Americans fall victim to violent crime at more than [double the rate of all other US citizens](#), according to BJS reports. Eighty-eight percent of violent crime committed against Native American women is carried out by non-Native perpetrators.

It's true that the majority of serious offenses committed by Native Americans are dealt with at the federal level—and this generally entails more severe sentencing. But to claim racialized disparities in incarceration are due to a few differences between state and federal sentencing policy grossly over-simplifies the problem.

Native Americans are more likely to be killed by police than any other racial group. Although most American minorities lack much of the communitarian

infrastructure that is shown to help mitigate crime, Native Americans are particularly deprived. The federal government can take active steps to resolve Native American overrepresentation in prisons and the juvenile corrections system by funding child and family services on reservations, as well as tribal juvenile and addiction rehabilitation centers. (Seventy percent of Native Americans convicted of violent crimes claim they had been drinking at the time of the offense, according to the LPLP.)

“I commend the Commission for creating a mechanism to develop insights and information that have the potential to impact the lives of our citizens in Indian Country,” Judge Erickson said [in a statement](#) released by the USSC in Feb. 2015. Hopefully, the Sentencing Commission’s second attempt will be more successful than its first. Because “insights and information” abound—what Native communities need now is real action, leading to real change.

Direct Link: <http://qz.com/392342/native-americans-are-the-unseen-victims-of-a-broken-us-justice-system/>

Native American Actors Walk Off Set For Racist Images; Should Black Actors Do The Same?

April 27, 2015 - By Charing Ball



Yesterday, I finally had the chance to watch the 2012 Brad Pitt, James Gandolfini, and Ray Liotta flick, *Killing Them Softly*. And while I won’t ruin it for you, let’s just say that it is your typical Boston-area mafia-related heist film. (Which is no surprise considering that it features both Gandolfini and Liotta, right?) You know, it’s about White people engaged in criminal activity while looking cool doing it.

Also of no surprise, the cast is all White – well, most of the cast is White...

The film's only person of color comes by way of a Black prostitute. What is her name? We're never told because obviously it doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is that she is there to service Gandolfini's character, an alcoholic hit man on the verge of losing his freedom and his lady, in a dusty motel room. She's also there to take his abuse. And during her brief appearance in the film he tells her that one day, she is going to get cut up into pieces by one of her johns. It is violent as much as it is dysfunctional. Yet, her only response is to make some wisecrack comment about how if that happens, it will likely be the first time that she can reach orgasm.

Now, I have nothing against who women are often forced, for economic reasons, to engage in sex work; but when it comes to the White imagination, Black women are routinely painted as jezebels, sapphires, and mammies and never fully actualized human beings with names or multi-dimensional identities of our own. And quite frankly, it is offensive, and I am sick of seeing it.

But in spite of my personal disgust of watching a Black woman once again be demeaned in the most violent of ways for the entertainment and enjoyment of mostly White America, the question always remains: Why do we keep taking these roles?

This question becomes an especially poignant one as I read the article from [Indian Country](#) about Native American actors who decided that they had enough of how White Hollywood portrays them.

According to the publication, a dozen Navajo Nation actors and actresses, as well as the Native American cultural advisor, walked off the set of Adam Sandler's newest film production called *The Ridiculous Six*. The film, which is being produced for Netflix, is supposed to be a parody of 1960 Western classic *The Magnificent Seven*, however, the Native American actors and actresses just saw it as another example of mostly White Hollywood exploiting and mocking their culture. As the paper writes:

Among the actors who walked off the set were Navajo Nation tribal members Loren Anthony, who is also the lead singer of the metal band Bloodline, and film student Allison Young. Anthony says that though he understands the movie is a comedy, the portrayal of the Apache was severely negligent and the insults to women were more than enough reason to walk off the set...Anthony says he was first insulted that the movie costumes that were supposed to portray Apache were significantly incorrect and that the jokes seemed to get progressively worse.

Actress Goldie Tom would go on to say that poor treatment from production and crew was the final straw.

The consultant, Bruce spoke to the crew and told them we should not have braids and chokers and he was very disappointed. He asked to speak with Adam Sandler. We talked to the producers about other things in the script and they said 'It's in the script and we are not going to change it.' Overall, we were just treated disrespectfully, the spoke down to us and treated everyone with strong tones.

The [Gawker-run website, Defamer](#), has a copy of the script, and in addition to getting the Native American clothing all wrong, the film is also filled with jokes like “Beaver Breath” and “Sits-On-Face,” which parodies Native American traditional names.

Now, some folks may want to shrug their shoulders and claim that the Navajo actors and actresses decision to walk off set is just the result of an overly-sensitive people being upset over what is supposed to be a comedy. And I’m certain that some folks have been this dismissive. But we see white Hollywood do this to the culture of people of color all the time in ways that it will not do to cultural and historical events that are of importance to them. In particular, Black culture — how we dress and our use of certain mannerism down to our sexual prowess — is turned into fodder for their entertainment. And rarely is it funny. To the contrary, the best way to devalue a culture is to “other” it as something other than normal. This cultural othering, through mockery, is not only how White culture defines itself, but it is also how the culture retains its domination by further perpetuating that there is an inherent “right” way to be a civilized human being.

Unfortunately, many of us buy into this. And no, I’m not talking about those who personally embody the stereotypes in real life. I’m talking about those of us who know these roles are offensive and dangerous, but will accept and play them in film and television anyway. Black actors regularly discuss their frustrations with playing drug dealers, prostitutes, maids, butlers and other domestics. And yet, there are very few Blacks in Hollywood who do not have a couple if not more, of those characters on their professional reels.

I get it: There are not a lot of options available for a working Black actor or actress in Hollywood. Therefore, beggars can’t be choosers. But the same could be said for the Native American actors and actresses. Heck, the only time we ever see them on screen is when a film has to do with the past. Yet, these actors and actresses were willing to put their careers on the line and never work again for a bigger cause, one that may seriously alter how we showcase Native Americans in future films.

Now, I don’t expect that tomorrow there will be a massive boycott in Hollywood over these demeaning roles – although it would be nice. However, I do hope that when material in a film is super questionable and outright offensive, some of us will also be brave enough to walk away.

Direct Link: <http://madamenoire.com/528970/native-american-actors-walk-off-set-for-racist-images-should-black-actors-do-the-same/>

Tiny California Native American tribe adopts members, including non-Indians, to boost revenue

Published April 27, 2015

[Associated Press](#)

ALTURAS, Calif. — A tiny, casino-owning Native American tribe in Northern California has pursued an unusual strategy to boost revenue: Adoption.

The Sacramento Bee (<http://bit.ly/1J4jjNJ>) reports that the Alturas Rancheria in Modoc County has adopted five members — two of whom are non-Indian — in recent years. The new members have come with ambitious plans to make money, including a cigarette manufacturing plant.

But the Bee says the plans have fizzled out, and the adopted members have contributed to conflict among the tribe.

The fight has landed in state and federal courts, and it recently required the U.S. Postal Service to decide which of the feuding members was entitled to receive the tribe's mail.

Direct Link: <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2015/04/27/tiny-california-native-american-tribe-adopts-members-including-non-indians-to/>

Infantile, contemptible Adam Sandler script attacks native Americans with age-old stereotypes

Just joking, right?

By: Randall King

Posted: 04/29/2015 3:00 AM |



Adam Sandler faces criticism after a group of American Indian actors walked off the set of his movie, *The Ridiculous Six*, following complaints over stereotypes and offensive names.

It was a flashpoint moment last week when native actors and extras walked off the set of the Adam Sandler-produced Netflix movie *The Ridiculous Six* to protest a predictably stupid comic exploitation of aboriginal tradition.

To recap: a group of actors left the set last Wednesday, April 22, over what they felt were ugly misrepresentations of Apache culture, which included one woman character called "Beaver's Breath" and another female character urinating while smoking a peace pipe.

Leaky script

Parts of the script for Netflix's *Ridiculous Six* were leaked last week. Here are some excerpts:

The Creek area is busy. Braves spearfish while children play in the water. Smoking Fox is on the banks of the creek, doing laundry with her best friends: a 30-ish chubby woman, BEAVER BREATH, and a younger woman, NEVER WEARS BRA (both Apache).

BEAVER BREATH: I have a big idea for your wedding: we decorate trees with toilet paper!

SMOKING FOX: What is this "toilet paper"?

BEAVER BREATH: Paper used to clean your chi-wat after taking a chungo.

NEVER-WEARS-BRA: That what dead squirrel for!

BEAVER BREATH: Why we all so afraid to try something new in this village? Must I speak with the spirits to see if it "OK" to have clean chi-wat without murdering innocent rodent?

NEVER-WEARS-BRA: Whoa somebody "on the raccoon" today... Another scene, with character Flaming Wolf, continues to bring up demeaning stereotypes:

FLAMING WOLF: Me never hear of him. I know a "Five Hairy Moles" and a "One Eyebrow" and my cousin "Four Pickles" but no "Three Knives." Sorry.

The walk-out wouldn't have happened a few decades back, when Hollywood had a tradition of casting swarthy white guys not just as background players but in significant historic roles — Jewish-American Jeff Chandler played Cochise in *Broken Arrow* (1950). (In a spinoff TV series, the same role was played by Syrian-born Michael Ansara.) In that same spirit, Hollywood cast Italian-Swiss-German actor Victor Mature in the title role of *Chief Crazy Horse* (1955).

One hopes Mel Brooks was specifically lampooning this tendency when he played the role of an "Indian Chief" in *Blazing Saddles*, done up in full chief garb, speaking in Yiddish.

It is progress that Hollywood is now obliged to cast First Nations actors in those roles, given the understanding that adding cosmetics to white actors isn't just inaccurate, it's insulting.

In the face of racist portrayals, one shouldn't be surprised by the on-set protest. Who better to protect their reputation than the aboriginal actors on the front lines of the indignity?

By the way, one can't invoke *Blazing Saddles* as a precedent for potentially offensive satire, for no other reason than it was silly humour done by smart guys with their hearts in the right place.

Anyone who has suffered through a *Grown Ups* movie knows the Sandler oeuvre is dumb humour done by dumb guys. If you have any doubt about that, note the following bit of dialogue, penned by Sandler and Tim Herlihy, leaked from the *Ridiculous Six* script, in which a character addresses a "squaw" named Sits-on-Face. "How about this, we go some place and I'll put my pee-pee in your teepee?"

Obviously, humour doesn't get much lower. For their part, Netflix's defence is basically that the film's stupidity is its own justification.

"The movie has 'ridiculous' in the title for a reason — because it is ridiculous," a Netflix spokesman said. "It is a broad satire of western movies and the stereotypes they popularized, featuring a diverse cast that is not only part of — but in on — the joke."

In on the joke? Apparently not.

If hackles were raised, perhaps it has to do with the suspicion that First Nations people appear to be one of the last remaining safe targets for racism in entertainment. Comedy at the expense of blacks, Jews, gays and lesbians is no longer fair game for Hollywood writers.

Note a 2013 episode of the sitcom *Mike & Molly*, in which Melissa McCarthy's mother-in-law (Rondi Reed) dropped this incredibly ugly line on the subject of Arizona: "You ever been to Arizona? It's just a furnace full of drunk Indians."

It may have been debatable casting Johnny Depp as Tonto in the 2013 Disney adventure *The Lone Ranger*, notwithstanding Depp's distant aboriginal ancestry. And yes, it was he, not the Lone Ranger, who was the movie's main hero. Even so, the movie's most upsetting moment was a comic escape scene cross-cut with a massacre of outgunned warriors. That shockingly tone-deaf blend of slapstick comedy and historic tragedy is presumably one of the reasons that movie bombed so badly.

Just last week, on an episode of the Fox TV series *Backstrom*, Rainn Wilson's detective character unloads on Adam Beach's reserve police captain, Jesse Rocha, a romantic rival, calling him, among other things, "Tonto." It was pretty shocking, even in the context of the *Backstrom* character's established bigotry. (For the record, he is equally hateful towards Asians and even Christians.)

But of course, context is key. Beach will return to *Backstrom* this week for the season finale, hopefully to answer the *Backstrom* character's idiotic racism in the best possible way, with a fleshed-out portrayal of a smart character doing his job.

By all appearances, we can hold no such hope for Sandler's movie. A likely scenario: dumb parents will let their kids watch it and those kids will feel it's perfectly all right to, say, make up funny names for the aboriginal kids in their school.

Claiming "satire" is probably the worst insult of all. Real satire exposes prejudice, it doesn't perpetuate it.

Direct Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/arts-and-life/entertainment/movies/Sandlers-slip-another-blip-on--301450571.html>

Latest Murder of Indigenous Union Leader an Attack on Self-Determination

[Rick Kearns](#)

4/27/15

Indigenous Colombian leader Fernando Salazar Calvo was shot to death outside his home on April 7 and local authorities are calling for a "top-level" investigation into the murder of Calvo who was also a noted human rights worker and spokesman for an indigenous miner's association.

"We don't want a shoddily run, local investigation of the case," says Hector Jaime Vinasco, Coordinator of Mining Issues for the Cañamomo Lomapieta Indigenous Reserve, and former Governor of the Reserve.

"We've had too many awful, local investigations. We need pressure for a top-level investigation, now," Vinasco continued.

"What is under attack are our rights to self-determination and autonomy. Our rights to regulate our own ancestral mining, under our own jurisdiction."

Calvo was a representative of the Reserve's Ancestral Mining Association (known as ASOMICARS in Spanish) as well as President of the Miners Association Union (MAU). Embera Chami people have been mining gold in that region since before the Spanish

invasion, using traditional methods that do not include chemicals such as mercury and cyanide. The community has also banned large-scale mining operations.

Calvo as well as other indigenous Embera Chami leaders have received death threats in the last year due to their defense of their ancestral mining and prevention of outside operations on their territory.

Along with other leaders Calvo had also been granted precautionary measures of protection from Colombia's Constitutional Court due to the threats and past assassinations of Ember Chami leaders such as that of former Governor Gabriel Ángel Cartagena who was killed by paramilitaries in 2003, one year after having been granted the same precautionary protection.

"The murder of Fernando Salazar Calvo constitutes an act of aggression against our collective right to the ancestral territory, the indigenous authorities of the Cañamomo Lomapieta Reserve, the rules of our organizational processes, basically those of the mining process, to the leaders of our reserve and to the community in general," according to a press statement issued by the Traditional Authorities of the Cañamomo Lomapieta Reserve (TACLR).

The TACLR is urging President Juan Manuel Santos to conduct a thorough, independent and truthful investigation into the murder of Calvo and for the Chancellery to follow up with the precautionary measures of protection issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights last year to ensure the safety of Embera Chami leaders and the entire community.

Read more at <https://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/04/27/latest-murder-indigenous-union-leader-attack-self-determination-160149>

Indigenous groups in the U.S. struggle to retain, and relearn, dying languages

By [Soni Sangha](#)

Published April 27, 2015

[Fox News Latino](#)



Every day, indigenous languages in Latin America are slipping away.

Growing up in Oaxaca, a city located about 300 miles south of Mexico City, Arcenio and Noe Lopez's parents tried to steer them away from using the indigenous Mixtec language. They wanted to spare them the sense of inferiority that traditionally came with being a Oaxacan.

But it wasn't until the family moved to the U.S. that the brothers experienced outright discrimination from fellow Mexicans, which eventually motivated them to explore their roots.

"I was called Oaxacito," Arcenio said, recalling a term that means "little Oaxacan," a reference to the smaller stature and darker complexion of the indigenous population, which along with other overtures inspired him to research his heritage. "Eventually I came to [realize] my language gives me my unique identity as an indigenous person," he told Fox News Latino.

Now living in California and Texas, the Lopezes devote their time and energy to reversing a course of action played out for generations that has pushed languages like theirs close to extinction.

Noe and Arcenio represent a growing number of Latinos in the U.S. who are trying to retain their indigenous language even though it has forced them, they say, to endure discrimination.

"There's this risk that many in the younger generations will lose their language because of racism," Noe said, adding that indigenous speakers often feel their language limits their economic and social advancement. "It will cause them to speak it less because it makes them feel inferior."

There are roughly [6,000 to 7,000 languages spoken in the world today, according to UNESCO](#). ➡ As globalization moves forward, half of them are predicted to vanish within a century, UNESCO says. Adults will continue picking up the most used language around

the globe and children at school will transition away from the lesser used indigenous languages.

In the U.S., the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities give federal dollars to support documenting endangered languages – a total of about \$4 million a year to research and capture languages that are dying out.

The Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America (AILLA) is an online project at the University of Texas at Austin, the school where Noe is finishing his doctorate degree. It includes materials on 24 endangered languages spoken in Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Venezuela.

One of those languages is Tucano, considered severely endangered because it is spoken by fewer than 5,000 people who live in the Amazon regions of Brazil and Colombia.

Another NSF and NEH project documents Ayook, a language thought to have ties to one of the earliest dominating cultures of Latin America. There are 5,000 people who speak it around the town of Totontepec in southern Mexico, where indigenous leaders have been trained to record their language on both video and audio. Others in the Totontepec community have been trained in transcription, translation and analysis so they can work on preserving and reviving their language.

“They are recovering the oral history of native people to their natural landscape,” said Mary Downs, who oversees the NEH grant program. “It’s the language that is recording significance of the place.”

New York City, which has experienced a large growth in the number of Mexicans from Oaxaca and Guerrero is home to about 800 highly endangered languages from all over the world. According to the Endangered Language Alliance, about one out of three Mexican-born immigrants in the Big Apple speak an indigenous language.

“Anybody who comes from south of the border is classified as Latino; Latino means Spanish,” said Juan Aguirre, executive director of community organization Mano a Mano, which works in partnership with the Alliance. “Those assumptions can create problems with populations that don’t speak Spanish; a lot of these speakers may be bilingual but not fully,” he told FNL.

The most often encountered language in New York City is a dialect of Mixtec – there are about 50 language varieties of Mixtec, Aguirre said, and about a dozen of them are endangered.

The Endangered Language Alliance is documenting and creating awareness of the rarity of these languages but its main charge has been creating workshops to give speakers a chance to interact with others and a framework to further their own knowledge of their language.

It has also helped get interpreters to facilitate with healthcare providers and schools.

“There is a lot of pressure to give [these languages] up, but many are adamant to preserve them as well,” said Steve Zeitlin, executive director of City Lore, a cultural center that recently ran a four-month exhibit showcasing a variety of dialects and languages, including Totonac, which is spoken in Veracruz and Puebla.

“It’s not easy to do; we’re talking about generations so it also relies on children teaching their children,” Zeitlin said.

The Lopezes are doing their best. Arcenio is the executive director of the Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project, based in Oxnard, where there is a large farming community. Many of those workers are Mixteco, and Arcenio says the language barrier makes them vulnerable to poorer working conditions and pay than their Spanish-speaking counterparts.

The organization also helps bring Mixteco interpreters into schools and is also planning to create a radio station that will air programming in Mixteco and Zapotec.

Arcenio said music and informative shows will be a big part of their programming, but his greatest hope is that the station – set to launch in July – also teaches to write and speak the convalescent languages.

“Our fight has not been [focused on] building pride,” Arcenio said. “Our fight has been to [respond] to the larger communities telling us: ‘You must forget your cultural beliefs, you must assimilate this other language.’”

Soni Sangha is a freelance writer based in New York City.

Direct Link: <http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/lifestyle/2015/04/27/indigenous-groups-in-us-struggle-to-retain-and-relearn-dying-languages/>

1920s Silent Film, Native American Cast Get Due Decades Late

DALLAS — Apr 29, 2015, 3:06 PM ET
By DAVID WARREN Associated Press

A long-lost silent film admired by historians as a rare visual account of Native American customs is being released after a private detective in [North Carolina](#) stumbled across a damaged copy.

"The Daughter of Dawn" — first screened in Los Angeles in 1920 — features a large cast of Comanche and Kiowa people and shows scenes of buffalo hunting and ceremonial

dances obscured by time. The copy, discovered more than a decade ago, has been restored and was screened in [Texas](#) this week, ahead of its commercial release later this year.

"We were just so stunned that it existed," said Jeff Moore, a project director for the [Oklahoma](#) Historical Society, which purchased reels of the film from the detective in 2007.

The delicate restoration work took years, and an orchestral score was completed in 2012. A year later the Library of Congress added the movie to its National Film Registry, describing the work as "a fascinating example of the daringly unexpected topics and scope showcased by the best regional, independent filmmaking during the silent era. ..."

The year after the movie was first screened, a fire destroyed the Dallas warehouse where the small Texas Film Co., which produced "The Daughter of Dawn, stored most of its work.

Somehow, a copy later ended up in the care of a North Carolina resident, who offered five nitrate celluloid reels to the private detective as payment in an unrelated matter, Milestone Film owner Dennis Doros said.

The detective then sold the reels of the movie — shot in the Wichita Mountains in southwestern Oklahoma — to the Oklahoma Historical Society for more than \$5,000 before Milestone was recruited as the distributor. The historical society retains ownership of the original nitrate film, which is being stored at the Pickford Center for Motion Picture Study in Los Angeles.

"It's a really compelling story for film restoration," Doros said. "There's still hope for lost films. How many times do you get to premiere a film 95 years after its production?"

An initial screening of the 87-minute, black-and-white film was held this week at an Amarillo library.

"The village scenes, the hunting scenes all look very accurate," Michael Grauer with the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum told the Amarillo Globe-News. "It's a little bit Hollywood-ed up. ... But the fact that they used native actors was groundbreaking, really quite astonishing."

Two of the approximately 300 Comanche and Kiowa people in the film, which portrays a fictional love story that also serves as a record of Native-American traditions, are children of legendary Comanche chief Quanah Parker, whose exploits were widely recounted on the frontier.

Author S.C. Gwynne, whose book "Empire of the Summer Moon" accounted the rise and fall of the Comanche, said during his research he came across only one film germane to

the tribe, a two-reeler western from 1911 called "The Bank Robbery" in which Parker had a role.

"I would think that a film featuring only Native Americans would possibly be unique," he said. "Who at that time only made a film featuring Native Americans? That, to me, is something of great rarity."

Moore said the Oklahoma Historical Society had known about the film because years ago it had obtained the works of a photographer who was on the movie set, but it was thought the film was lost.

"This is so visually interesting and it is very much an Oklahoma story because you have two of the premier tribes in the state, and then you have the horse culture," he said. "It's so indicative of the southern plains."

Bryan Vizzini, an associate professor of history at West Texas A&M University, said "The Daughter of Dawn" was a striking departure from the racial stereotypes found in films from that time, such as D.W. Griffith's "The Birth of a Nation."

"And here's this small independent film company that gets it right," Vizzini said. "It's a very un-Hollywood kind of experience."

The film will be released on DVD and Blue-ray, and made available through online outlets.

Direct Link: <http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/wireStory/1920s-silent-film-native-american-cast-due-decades-30677972>

New White House Grant Program Aims To Improve Education For Native American Students

The Huffington Post | By [Rebecca Klein](#)

Posted: 04/29/2015 12:07 pm EDT Updated: 4 hours ago



The Obama administration appears to be putting some of its money where its mouth is in its efforts to improve outcomes for Native American students.

The White House announced in a call with reporters Wednesday morning that it plans to make [\\$3 million in grants](#) available to Native American communities to help native youth become more college- and career-ready.

Specifically, officials from the Department of Education said they would distribute five to seven grants, ranging from \$400,000 to \$600,000, to tribal communities throughout the country. They also noted President Barack Obama's proposed budget for fiscal year 2016 asks for increased investments in this area and that they hope to receive additional funding.

The grant program, called Native Youth Community Projects, is part of [Generation Indigenous](#), a broad initiative designed to improve the lives of native youth that the president announced in December 2014.

"We know that tribes are in the best position to determine the needs and barriers that Native youth face," Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said in a press release. "The Native Youth Community Projects will allow tribal communities to come together to improve outcomes for students."

"Each project will look different because each community is different," Joy Silvern, deputy chief of staff for the Department of Education, said on the call. "The initiative will allow people in the community to come together and ... develop very specific strategies designed to improve college- and career-readiness."

Obama launched Generation Indigenous after visiting the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Nation in North Dakota in June 2014. While on the trip, the president heard from native youth about challenges facing their community.

"[I love these young people](#)," Obama said after the meeting with native students. "I only spent an hour with them. They feel like my own."

Indeed, Native American youth throughout the country face a set of unique and daunting challenges. This population faces high rates of poverty and suicide as well as low graduation rates.

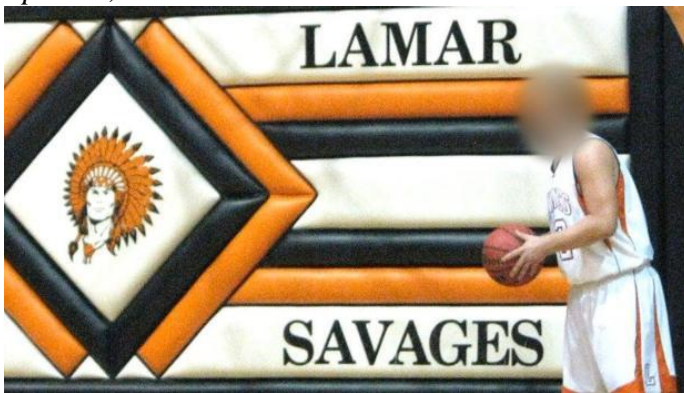
"Native youth and Native education are in a state of emergency. Low rates of educational attainment perpetuate a cycle of limited opportunity for higher education or economic success for American Indians and Alaska Natives," says a damning [report on the state of Native American youth](#) the White House released in December. "This crisis has grave consequences for Native nations, who need an educated citizenry to lead their governments, develop reservation economies, contribute to the social well-being of Native communities, and sustain Indian cultures."

Applications for the grant money -- which ask tribal communities to propose a project that would improve the quality of educational opportunities available for native youth -- are due this summer.

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/29/native-american-grant-program_n_7167022.html

Colorado Senate Weighs Bill Limiting Native American Mascots

April 29, 2015 8:55 AM



DENVER (AP) – Legislation to prohibit [Native American mascots](#) at Colorado schools unless a tribe approves faces its toughest test in the state Senate.

The proposal passed the House this month by one vote with every Republican opposed. Now it's up for a vote in a GOP-led Senate committee on Wednesday.

The bill would direct schools to get permission from a panel of tribes to use or continue to use Native American mascots. Schools that don't get permission would have to stop the use within two years or face a fine of \$25,000 a month.

Schools and lawmakers opposed to the bill have cited the costs of switching mascots and updating uniforms as a major concern.

Supporters say the state should not condone derogatory team names at schools.

Direct Link: <http://denver.cbslocal.com/2015/04/29/colorado-senate-weighs-bill-limiting-native-american-mascots/>